A Shared Landscape

Aboriginal and Chinese labour on a New South Wales pastoral station, 1832-1899

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14,960 Words

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Introduction

In 1832, William Montagu Rothery and his brother, Frederick, founded Cliefden, a pastoral station in central western New South Wales. This thesis examines Aboriginal and Chinese labour at Cliefden during the period 1832-1899. It takes Cliefden as a case study, a 'situated context' of shared European, Aboriginal and Chinese experience. Using a rich array of archives from this station, it argues that, notwithstanding intense violence on expanding colonial frontiers, some pastoral stations could be places of necessary mutual accommodation and relatively equitable labour. It also argues that, for Chinese, some pastoral stations could be places of ongoing labour outside the goldfields and away from the pernicious anti-Chinese hostility prevalent during the second half of the nineteenth century. In so doing, it aims to add new historical insights into Indigenous and Chinese experience in nineteenth-century rural Australia and reveal the shared landscape of the mid- to late-nineteenth century pastoral station.

The daily labour experiences of both Aboriginal and Chinese workers on pastoral stations are areas of developing, but not yet extensive, scholarship. This thesis builds on that scholarship and overturns two general presumptions: that the Aboriginal labour experience on pastoral stations was always based on inequitable labour relations, and that Chinese workers were few, itinerant, and equally underpaid. As well, this thesis offers a more comprehensive view of one pastoral station as a 'contact zone', a 'shared landscape', and a site of colonial labour for Aboriginal, European and Chinese peoples.[1] Historian Tony Ballantyne recently made the point that, while there is a need for more work that maps broad patterns and pursues large questions, it needs to 'sit alongside and engage with the more specialised and localised research that should be the lifeblood of history as a discipline'.[2] As a localised study, this thesis contributes to that lifeblood.

There has been some debate in recent years about how accurate the term 'shared landscape' really is when applied in the settler-colonial context. Archaeologist Ian McNiven and anthropological historian Lynette Russell, for example, dispute the categorisation of a 'shared' space during the contact period on both terminological and conceptual grounds. They point out that to say that the landscape was 'shared' denies the

[1] On the idea of the 'contact zone', see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992). On the idea of the 'shared landscape', see Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (Sydney, 2004).
[2] T. Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Wellington, 2012), p. 294.

reality that colonial authorities imposed upon, coerced, and forced Aboriginal people to occupy those locations that some scholars now describe as shared.[3] While this is true in the case of Aboriginal missions and reserves, it does not entirely apply to a pastoral station such as Cliefden.

Pastoral Australia was certainly a scene of inter-racial conflict. In the last four decades, historians have explored the frequently violent consequences of pastoral expansion in New South Wales, including the massacres of that period.[4] However, despite the conflict arising from that expansion, pastoral stations could also be the setting for the exchange of cultural and environmental knowledge between Aboriginal and settler Australians, and by necessity, places of accommodation as well as sites of labour. As historian Ann McGrath expresses it, 'colonial takeover was not welcomed by Aborigines, but many pastoralists, of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent, also honoured a humane and conciliatory tradition; they learnt from each other, lived alongside each other, and they got to respect one another's views'.[5] As I will argue in this thesis, on Cliefden Station Europeans and Aborigines sought to honour such a tradition of shared accommodation, and in particular, relatively equitable labour relations, despite the clear inequity of pastoral expansion.

In 1995, McGrath and Kay Saunders identified the need for more research on Aboriginal labour in Australian history when they introduced the first collection of essays on this subject.[6] Since 1995, additional scholarship on Aboriginal work has emerged. Amongst that of particular relevance to this thesis is an article by Robert Foster focusing on the 'colonisation' of Aboriginal labour in the South Australian pastoral industry between 1860 and 1911.[7] Foster agrees with Bill Thorpe's 1992 appraisal of Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry as 'colonised labour', a 'related but distinct form' of slave labour, wherein the colonised worker 'is alternatively valued … but also devalued,

[3] I. J. McNiven and L. Russell, *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, 2005), p. 226.
[4] For example: J. Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars* (Sydney, 2002); R. Milliss, *Waterloo Creek: the Australia Day Massacre of 1838, George Gipps and the British Conquest of New South Wales* (Sydney, 1992); H. Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (North Sydney, 1987).
[5] A. McGrath, 'History, Wik and Relations between Aborigines and Pastoralists', in [no editor] *Sharing Country: Land Rights, Human Rights and Reconciliation after Wik*, Proceedings of a Public Forum (Sydney, 1997), pp. 91-92.
[6] A. McGrath and K. Saunders, 'Introduction', *Labour History*, 69 (November 1995), p. vii.
[7] R. Foster, 'Rations, Coexistence, and the Colonisation of Aboriginal Labour in the South Australian Pastoral Industry, 1860-1911', *Aboriginal History*, 24 (2000), pp. 1-26.

employed and unemployed, paid but mostly unpaid, integrated but mostly marginalised'.[8] The means by which the colonisation of Aboriginal labour in South Australia occurred, Foster argues, was the distribution of rations by police and pastoralists on the government's behalf, and the right granted to Aboriginal people to continue living on pastoral leases. An important point that Foster emphasises is that Aboriginal people associated with pastoral stations were able to maintain many aspects of their traditional way of life and their traditional association with their country.[9]

Historians who express a similar view about the same issue in other parts of Australia include McGrath in her study of Northern Australian cattle stations, and Michael Bennett in his 2003 doctoral thesis examining Aboriginal economic responses to white settlement in the Shoalhaven and Illawarra region of New South Wales.[10] The present thesis provides evidence that supports their theses. Furthermore, it challenges the popular racist stereotypes of Aboriginal people as lazy, non-productive, or unwilling to work, stereotypes enabled, according to McGrath and Saunders, by the lack of scholarship on Aboriginal work.[11]

There has also been a lack of scholarly attention to Chinese in the pastoral industry. Overwhelmingly, scholarship concerning the Chinese in colonial Australia has centred on those attracted to the Australian gold fields and the fears that led to restrictive laws that discouraged Chinese immigration. This has tended to obscure the concurrent and lingering presence of Chinese in the pastoral industry. A special issue of *Journal of Australian Colonial History* entitled *Active Voices, Hidden Histories: the Chinese in Colonial Australia* exemplifies this situation. It contains twelve articles, nine of which focus on Chinese associated with various colonial goldfields; the single article on Chinese in the pastoral industry does not go beyond 1855.[12] The lack of attention to Chinese in the pastoral industry is not surprising, as the number of those involved was comparatively small; they were more scattered and consequently less conspicuous, but certainly no less significant and worthy of study.

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[8] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[9] Ibid., p. 19.
[10] A. McGrath, *Born in the Cattle* (Sydney, 1987), pp. 106, 158-9; M. Bennett, 'For a Labourer Worthy of His Hire: Aboriginal Economic Responses to Colonisation in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, 1770-1900' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Canberra, 2003).
[11] McGrath and Saunders, 'Introduction', p. vii.
[12] *Journal of Australian Colonial History* entitled *Active Voices, Hidden Histories: the Chinese in Colonial Australia*, Vol. 6 (2004).

In 2001, historian Ian Jack referred to the example of Chinese labour on a New South Wales pastoral station when he pointed out that 'there is still a great deal to be learnt about the diversity of the early Chinese experience in Australia outside the gold-fields and away from the pernicious hostility that may have interested historians too much'.[13] Keir Reeves and Tseen Khoo have since indicated that even though the mid-to-late-nineteenth century is arguably the most well-covered period of Chinese Australian historical scholarship it is 'still very much in the process of being understood in more inclusive and situated contexts'.[14] In this thesis, I take Cliefden Station as a 'situated context' of Chinese experience outside the goldfields and away from the 'pernicious hostility' referred to by Professor Jack.

This thesis seeks to build on and, in some ways, contest the findings of a relatively small body of literature about the labour of Chinese people in the pastoral industry in New South Wales during the nineteenth century. While many scholars have included a paragraph or two, or sometimes a few pages or even a chapter in broader studies of the Chinese in Australia or labour on pastoral stations,[15] only Maxine Darnell has produced a detailed study.[16] Her doctoral thesis focuses specifically on the indentured Chinese labour trade into New South Wales that began in 1847 and ended in 1855. It examines the experiences of Chinese shepherds on nine pastoral stations spread across an extensive geographic area referred to as 'the northern pastoral districts' before the separation of Queensland from New South Wales.

Amongst the issues examined by Darnell are the wages and conditions of indentured Chinese shepherds, whether they ended their periods of employment in credit, and their involvement with the legal system. Her findings give a largely negative impression of life for indentured Chinese shepherds in the northern districts. She found that they agreed to work for a particular employer for five years at a wage significantly lower

[13] I. Jack, 'Some Less Familiar Aspects of the Chinese in 19th Century Australia' in H. Chan, A. Curthoys and N. Chiang, eds, *The Overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, Settlement and Interactions* (Taipei, 2001) , pp. 51-53.
[14] K. Reeves and T. Khoo, 'Dragon Tails: Reinterpreting Chinese Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 42, Part 1 (2011), p. 6.
[15] M. Rodwell, 'Figures in the Landscape: The Experience of the Least Visible Workers on a New England Pastoral Station, 1850-1900', *Labour History*, No. 103 (November 2012), p. 26; B. McGowan, 'Shoulder Yokes and Moon Cakes: The Chinese diaspora in the Riverina district of New South Wales, Australia, 1850 to the present', *Historic Environment*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), pp. 26-34; for earlier work, see also K. Cronin, *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria* (Melbourne, 1982), pp. 5-15.
[16] M. Darnell, 'The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales 1783-1853' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of New England, 1997).

than that offered to European workers. In many cases, they received a small advance, but had the cost of their passage deducted from their earnings and received smaller amounts of rations than received by their European counterparts. She also found that they were over-represented in the courts, mainly on charges of insubordination.

Nicholas Brodie has also examined indentured Chinese shepherds. His article concerning Leopold Fane de Salis and the Chinese shepherds who worked for him in the Riverina and South Western Slopes of New South Wales is currently under review.[17] It builds on Darnell's work, differing in terms of geographic location, revealing a slightly earlier date for the commencement of the indentured labour trade, and providing insights into the relationship between indentured labour and later immigration restrictions.[18] Brodie points out that his study concerns areas never before identified as being particularly significant for early Chinese pastoral labour, but his study is still limited specifically to indentured labour.[19] Until now, un-indentured Chinese pastoral labour in colonial New South Wales has remained an unexplored field.

This thesis builds on the work of Darnell, Brodie and other scholars. The Chinese who are the subject of this study worked in a variety of roles, not only as shepherds. Furthermore, they were un-indentured when they worked at Cliefden, and may never have been indentured. Darnell explains that she makes little reference to the lives of Chinese labourers post-indenture, primarily due to the incomplete nature of those station records used in her study.[20] By drawing on the rich Cliefden Station archive, this thesis sheds light on the experiences of un-indentured Chinese in a location and period not yet studied in the context of Chinese pastoral labour. While it examines issues similar to those examined by Darnell, it reveals a history in many ways at variance with the history she discovered.

The specific questions this thesis seeks to address include: What was the nature of the relationship between the proprietor of Cliefden - William Montagu Rothery - and the Aboriginal and Chinese members of his workforce? What kind of acculturation occurred, particularly amongst the Aboriginal people? What tasks did Aboriginal and Chinese workers perform on the property? And importantly, were their wages comparable with

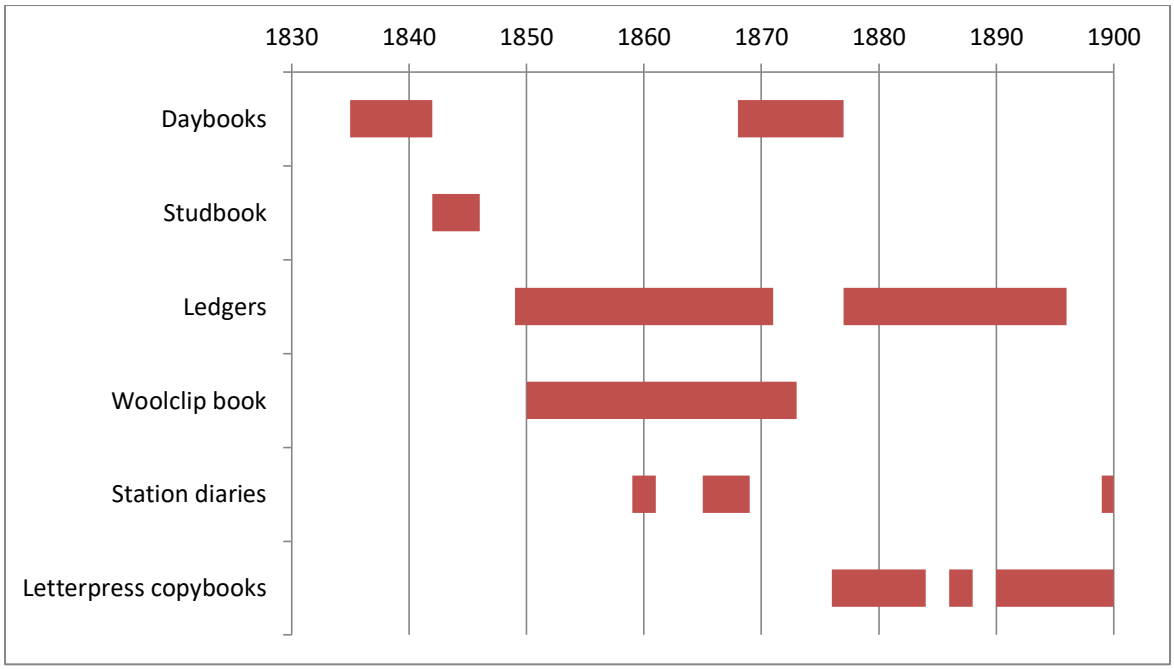
[17] N. D. Brodie, 'The de Salis experiment and the origin and end of Chinese indentured labour in colonial Australia 1847-1881', unpublished paper, copy furnished by author. I am grateful to N. Brodie for allowing me to see a draft of this article.
[18] Ibid., p. 1.
[19] Ibid., p. 2.
[20] Darnell, 'The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales', p. 6.

those paid to European workers? Historians studying Aboriginal and Chinese labour on pastoral stations in other parts of New South Wales have been particularly interested in these significant issues.

The Cliefden Station archives

The Cliefden Station records microfilmed by the Mitchell Library in Sydney in 1975 provide the basic source material for this thesis. The ten microfilms contain records that date from 1818 to 1913. The chart below shows the time coverage of each type of record in the archive that falls within the period examined in this thesis.

Table 1. Record types and coverage in the Cliefden Station archive



While none of the individual record types covers the entire period under study, they collectively constitute a rich and detailed archive that helps to elucidate the station lives of Aboriginal, Chinese and European workers, those about whom few documents generally exist. Their main strength lies in the proximity between the occurrence of the events recorded, and the creation of the records. Almost without exception, the diaries and daybooks, for example, contain eyewitness accounts recorded soon after the events or transactions took place.

Similarly, the ledgers are a day-by-day record of financial dealings with employees and others involved with the station community. They are important for this study because

of the key personnel information they contain. The earlier ledger (1849-1870) is a record of individual agreements with workers, descriptions of the debts they incurred at the station store, and payments made to them, minus deductions for their debts. Various station storekeepers maintained this ledger, whereas Rothery maintained the later ledger himself. The later ledger (1877-1895) differs from the earlier one; it rarely includes records of individual workers' agreements or the specific work for which they were employed. Nevertheless, both ledgers are vital to this study, partly because they cover the largest portion of the period under review, and partly because of their individualised nature.

Like most primary sources, the Cliefden Station records are not without deficiencies. In addition to incomplete coverage, they vary in legibility and detail and are highly male-gendered in both authorship and content, a reflection of the male-dominated nineteenth-century pastoral environment. Many of the letters are partially or completely illegible, a consequence of the manner in which they were copied, as well as of deterioration over time.[21] Fortunately, some of Rothery's original letters to one recipient exist in a collection held by the National Library of New Zealand. Those from the early 1850s predate the Cliefden letterpress copybooks and provide important contextual evidence for the introduction of Chinese labour on Cliefden Station.

William Montagu Rothery

As Cliefden Station is not a widely known property and William Montagu Rothery is not a well-known figure, a brief introduction to the property and its founder is necessary. William Montagu Rothery and his brother, Frederick John, had been law students at Lincoln's Inn in London prior to their departure for New South Wales in October 1830, aged twenty-one and twenty-six respectively.[22] However, neither had been admitted to the bar.[23] Their decision to emigrate was influenced by a family friend, Thomas Icely, who had first visited the colony as a trader in 1820, returned to settle there in 1822, and acquired land in the Bathurst and Parramatta districts by grant and purchase over the subsequent

[21] For a description of the use of nineteenth-century letterpresses, see Society of American Archivists, http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/l/letterpress-copybook, accessed 31 March 2014.
[22] *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: Vol. II, Admissions From A.D. 1800 to A.D. 1893, and Chapel Registers* (London, 1896), pp. 108 and 127.
[23] *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, Vol. IV: The Black Books (London, 1896)* contains the names of those called to the bar between 1776 and 1845. Despite family tradition identifying them as barristers, the Rothery brothers' names are not in the list.

eight years.[24] Icely returned to England in 1830 and married Charlotte Rothery, the sister of W. Montagu and Frederick Rothery, in July 1830.[25] Shortly after the wedding, the Rothery brothers wrote to the Colonial Office in London enquiring about the possibility of acquiring free land in New South Wales.

The reply they received assured them that as long as they proceeded to the colony, satisfied the colonial government that they possessed the requisite capital and agreed to the regulatory conditions, the Governor would make them each a grant of land.[26] Their father, a retired naval officer, gave Montagu and Frederick each £2500, spent £860 on 'implements of husbandry' and horses for them (including one thoroughbred), and paid their cabin fares to New South Wales.[27] He was clearly in favour of his sons' emigration. Land trumped a law degree at a time when there was a surplus of lawyers and a shortage of land in England.

The Rothery brothers submitted land grant applications a few days after arriving in Sydney with Charlotte and Thomas Icely in February 1831.[28] The capital they possessed entitled each of them to the maximum grant of 2560 acres, which Governor Darling promised them on 22 April 1831.[29] They each signed bonds agreeing to remain in the colony for a period of three years, then selected 100-acre blocks near the town of Bathurst, and 2460-acre allotments on gently undulating box-forest country about fifty miles south-west of Bathurst and adjacent to land acquired by Thomas Icely in 1829.[30] They later sold the smaller blocks.

Frederick Rothery may never have intended to stay on the land. He breached the bond he had signed by sailing for England in September 1832, returned fourteen months

[24] I. Jack, 'The Icely Family and Coombing Park, near Carcoar', *History* (September 2002), p. 3; Frances Leonora Macleay to William Macleay, 23 February 1831, in B. Earnshaw and J. Hughes, eds, *Fanny to William: The Letters of Frances Leonora Macleay 1812-1836* (Glebe, 1993), p. 131.
[25] Ancestry.com: Marriage Register, Parish of St Marylebone, Middlesex, England, marriage of Charlotte Rothery and Thomas Icely, 20 July 1830 (digital image).
[26] State Records NSW: Colonial Secretary's Office, NRS 907, Letters from Individuals re Land, 1826-1856, Item 2/7962: Colonial Office to Frederick J. and W. Montagu Rothery, 14 August 1830.
[27] Letters from Individuals re Land, ibid., Frederick J. and W. Montagu Rothery to the Land Board, Sydney, 8 March 1831; Ibid., Applications of Frederick J. and W. Montagu Rothery for Grants of Land; Receipt for passage to New South Wales per *Sovereign*, in storage at Cliefden, near Mandurama, New South Wales.
[28] 'Shipping Intelligence', *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 22 February 1831, p. 2; Letters from Individuals re Land, Applications, 27 February 1831.
[29] State Records NSW: Colonial Secretary's Office, Series NRS 907, Item 2/7962: Deeds prepared in favour of W. Montagu and Frederick J. Rothery.
[30] Letters from Individuals re Land, Deeds prepared in favour of Frederick J. and W. Montagu Rothery.

later, and departed again in March 1834.[31] Although he returned permanently to the colony in 1851,[32] he settled in Sydney and never played a role in the management of the pastoral station. Meanwhile, William Montagu Rothery named his acreage Cliefden, continued to add to his holdings by purchase and lease, and bought his brother's 2460-acre block of land in 1842.[33] By 1883, Cliefden Station consisted of some 38,000 acres.[34]

Figure 1. Studio photograph of William Montagu Rothery (1809-1899) c.1860 from Rothery family album, Cliefden

Figure 2. Portrait of Frederick John Rothery (1804-1860), c. 1850, artist unknown – Courtesy of Barry Jensen, Orange, NSW

Rothery's five surviving children sold the property in 1919 and the youngest immediately bought back the homestead block and a few surrounding blocks.[35] The current

[31] 'Shipping Intelligence', *Sydney Herald*, 1 October 1832, p. 2; *Ibid*., 18 November 1833, p. 2; *Ibid*., 27 March 1834, p. 2.
[32] 'Shipping Intelligence', *Empire* (Sydney), 31 May 1851, p. 2.
[33] Letters from Individuals re Land, Deeds prepared in favour of W. M. Rothery, 9 March 1836, 15 October 1836, 8 March 1837, 30 May 1838, 16 October 1838; Land Titles Office, NSW: Conveyance, Frederick John Rothery to Charles Lockyer, 1 August 1842, Book 2, No. 164, and conveyance, Charles Lockyer to William Montagu Rothery, 1 September 1842, Book 2, No. 165.
[34] W. Montagu Rothery to Clerk of Petty Sessions, Cowra, 25 May 1883, Cliefden Station Letterpress Copybook, ML FM4/6454.
[35] 'Cliefden Sale', *Canowindra Star and Eugowra News*, 7 November 1919, p. 5.

title includes 505 hectares (1248 acres) owned by one of Rothery's descendants.[36] This alone makes Cliefden noteworthy, as few pastoral properties west of the Blue Mountains that were settled during the colonial period remain in the hands of the same family.[37] Owing to having been the target of raids by bushranger Ben Hall and his gang in 1863 and 1864, the homestead recently gained recognition through being listed on the New South Wales Heritage Register. While the property has featured in newspaper and magazine articles,[38] and the buildings are subject to a conservation management plan, this is the first time the station archive has been used to examine significant historical questions such as the terms of Aboriginal and Chinese labour in the day-to-day operations of this station.

Two chapters follow this introduction. In the first, I examine the relationship between Rothery and the Wiradjuri Aboriginal people present on Cliefden Station from the time of Rothery's arrival in 1832. I also examine the movement from traditional Aboriginal patterns of life to increasing participation in the non-Aboriginal economy, and questions of rations, labour and Aboriginal subsistence. In the second chapter, I examine the circumstances surrounding the introduction of Chinese labour at Cliefden, and compare the wages of Chinese and European employees. I also compare the wages of Cliefden's Chinese shepherds with the indentured Chinese shepherds elsewhere in the colony at the same time, and examine the question of Chinese workers' involvement with the legal system. The examination of both Aboriginal and Chinese labour on the same station provides a rare opportunity to assess the degree of consistency between the treatment of these two sectors of the labour force by the same employer, and the extent to which Cliefden was a shared landscape.

To avoid awkward parentheses, I give distances only in miles, and weights in pounds and ounces because imperial measurements were standard in New South Wales during the period covered in this thesis. For the same reason, area is in acres, and currency in pounds, shillings and pence. There are sixteen ounces in one pound weight, the equivalent of 454 grams; five miles equal eight kilometres; 2.47 acres equal one hectare; there are twelve pence (p) in one shilling (s) and twenty shillings in one pound (£).

[36] Personal communication from David J. Rothery, 4 October 2014.
[37] M. Fallon, 'Cliefden Conservation Management Plan Final Draft' (Wentworth Falls, 2012), p. 4.
[38] For example: 'When Cliefden Was Built a Century Ago', *Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser*, 27 July 1939, p. 1; 'Ben Hall was a dinner guest in a house of old memories', *Woman's Day with Woman*, 20 February 1967, pp. 16-17; 'Secret caves and bushrangers part of a pioneer family's past', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 2 June 1982, p. 31; 'No pulling the wool over the Rothery sisters' eyes', *Sun-Herald*, 4 February 1990, p. 85.

Quotations from original sources retain the original spelling and, with a few exceptions, the original punctuation.

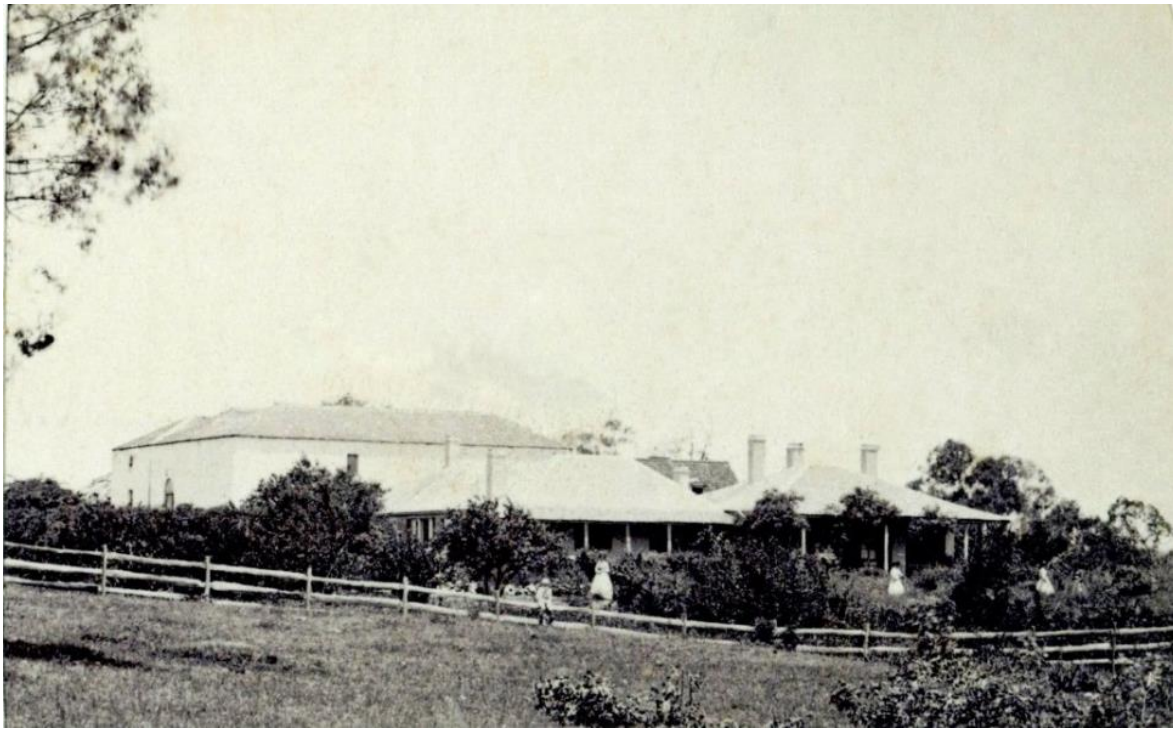


Figure 3. Cliefden homestead in foreground, multi-purpose farm building at rear, and members of the Rothery family in the garden, c.1872 - Rothery family album, Cliefden

Chapter One

'Friendly and very useful': Aboriginal labour on Cliefden

> We don't need to throw out our pastoral legends, for there is much to cherish in them, but we need to get the stories straight, and to see there is more than one plot. What must be brought to light are the previously hidden stories of hard work, affection, compromise, generosity of spirit, of sharing and co-operation between Aboriginal and white pastoralists who came together on one land.[1]

This chapter focuses on the documentary evidence of contact and exchange that occurred between Aboriginal people and William Montagu Rothery on Cliefden Station, bringing to light one of the previously hidden stories to which Ann McGrath alludes. Its chronological structure draws attention to the timing, nature and extent of movement from traditional Aboriginal patterns of life to increasing participation in the non-Aboriginal economy of Cliefden Station.

In 1831, when William Montagu Rothery chose the block of land he named Cliefden, he was probably aware that parts of the Bathurst district in which it lay had been the scene of frontier war between Europeans and people of the Wiradjuri Aboriginal nation in the early 1820s. Wiradjuri people near Bathurst had become increasingly agitated as pastoral settlement expanded, and they had responded to this rapid incursion by stealing sheep and killing shepherds. The deaths of seven shepherds near Bathurst in 1824 alarmed the settlers and the government to such a degree that Governor Brisbane decided to expand the Bathurst garrison and proclaim martial law west of the Blue Mountains in August that year.[2] The purpose of martial law was to protect soldiers and settlers from being charged with murder if they killed Aboriginal people.[3]

The *Sydney Gazette* reported that within days of the proclamation, a confrontation between a 'very large number of natives' and an overseer and two stockmen near Mudgee, about eighty miles north of Bathurst, resulted in the deaths of sixteen Wiradjuri people.[4] The reinforcement of the Bathurst garrison enabled the speedy deployment of a punitive expedition of about sixty men intent on killing any remaining Aboriginal people they could

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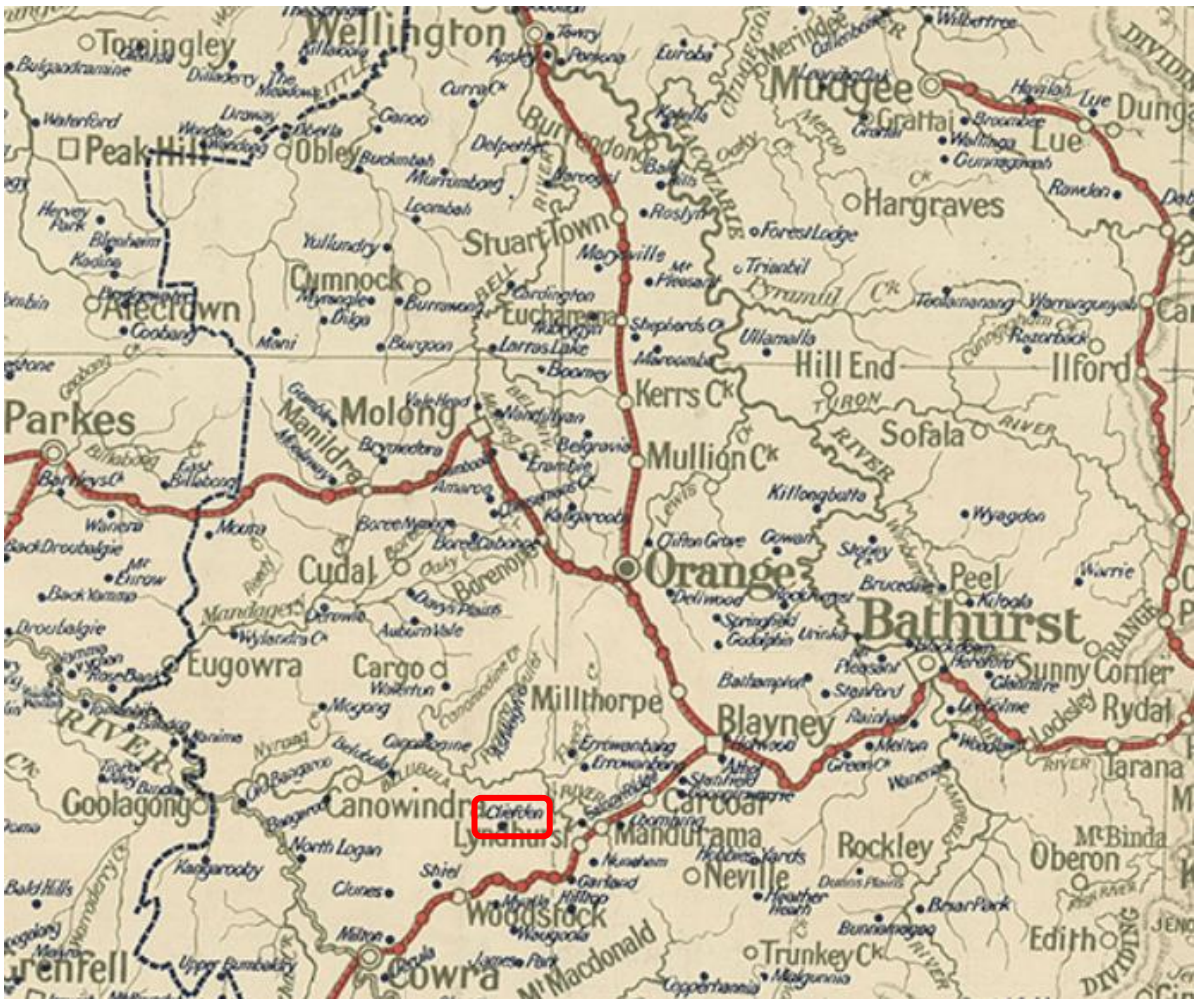
[1] A. McGrath, 'History, Wik and Relations between Aborigines and Pastoralists' [no editor] in *Sharing Country: Land Rights, Human Rights and Reconciliation after Wik* (Sydney, 1997), p. 92.
[2] R. H. W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists* (Sydney, 1974), p. 110; Governor's Proclamation, 14 August 1824, *Historical Records of Australia*, Vol. XI, p. 410.
[3] J. Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars* (Sydney, 2002), p. 58.
[4] *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 30 September 1824, p. 2.

find. The party included the Bathurst commandant, Major James Morriset, four magistrates, six mounted settlers, some Aboriginal guides, and about forty soldiers, some mounted and some on foot.[5]



Map 1. Cliefden Station in relation to Bathurst, Mudgee, Wellington and other towns mentioned in this thesis - Cliefden circled in red. *Map of New South Wales showing pastoral stations &c.* [cartographic material], H.E.C. Robinson, c.1903, SLNSW.

The expedition took about five days to reach Mudgee from Bathurst and then divided into four parties, each searching for ten days in a different direction before returning to Mudgee and then to Bathurst. According to historian John Connor, there were no Wiradjuri attacks or casualties during the course of the expedition.[6] However, missionary L. E. Threlkeld reported that a magistrate told him that:

> a large number [of Aborigines] were driven into a swamp, and mounted police rode round and round and shot them off indiscriminately until they were all

[5] Ibid.; Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p. 59.
[6] Connor, ibid.

> destroyed! When one of the police enquired of the Officer if a return should be made of the killed, wounded there were none, all were destroyed, Men, Women and children! The reply was … that there was no necessity for a return.[7]

By October 1824, a newspaper described the situation between Mudgee and Bathurst as 'exterminating war', while pointing out the contrasting situation in the neighbouring Wellington Valley, about fifty-five miles west of Mudgee, where 'the same natives are on terms of perfect amity with our prospering Settlement', often visiting to have their gunshot wounds dressed.[8] Antagonism between European and Wiradjuri people was clearly not universal.

During October and November 1824, Wiradjuri leaders walked into Bathurst asking for peace, probably having decided that a truce was the only way to ensure their survival.[9] Governor Brisbane responded by revoking martial law on 11 December 1824, and the Bathurst frontier remained quiet thereafter, though no doubt with some significantly weakened Wiradjuri groups.[10] By the time William Montagu Rothery arrived to take up his land grant about fifty-five miles south-west of Bathurst early in 1832, the Bathurst district had been 'peaceful' for seven years.

There is no evidence in the Cliefden archive that members of the Rothery family ever felt threatened by Aboriginal people. On the contrary, in reminiscences he recorded in 1887 about his experiences with 'the Blacks', W. Montagu Rothery expressed gratitude towards them for the assistance and protection they had provided when he arrived in 1832. He wrote:

> I spent the whole Winter in 1832 on my land and obtained all the information I could from the Blacks of what the country was to the West, North & South of my residence. They were friendly and very useful to those settling in new places at that time known to very few but themselves pointing out where the water was permanent. My long experience of Droughts proves them to have been strictly correct in this matter.[11]

Rothery particularly admired and valued their tracking ability, and their knowledge of the features and characteristics of the area. He wrote:

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[7] L. E. Threlkeld, "Reminiscences" in Gunson, *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L. E. Threlkeld*, Vol. 1, p. 49, cited in Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists*, p. 111.
[8] *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 14 October 1824, p. 2.
[9] Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars*, p. 61.
[10] Ibid.
[11] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887, ML FM4/6455.

> I only saw one kangaroo in the first three years I was in the Bush. The Blacks had tracked them all in this part. Their tracking was most astonishing. Once on the proper track nothing could escape them … There being no Roads or Tracks, when we wanted to erect a Hut in a new place I sent for the Blacks when they asked if it was for "Gallop" or "Wheelbarrow" meaning Horse or Bullock dray and always found the best road.[12]

Rothery's account suggests some degree of mutual accommodation in this early period of contact. Like many other settlers, he clearly depended on Indigenous knowledge for his survival.[13] In fact, he regarded 'his' Aboriginal people as his protectors. Continuing his reminiscences in 1887, he recalled, 'Some Fifty years ago my Three Blacks would stick to me if I was attacked by Whites. I had Experience of this'.[14] Unfortunately, he did not elaborate. As early as the 1830s, though, Rothery seems to have had no reason to feel threatened by Aboriginal people, but good reason to feel threatened by some of his own people.

There may be more to this story. The current occupant of Cliefden, a septuagenarian great-granddaughter of William Montagu Rothery, recalls the presence of a significant artefact, a crescent-shaped breastplate or gorget that she supposes her aunts may have sold to a collector.[15] Many Aboriginal people coveted breastplates principally as mere meal tickets, according to Carl Lumholtz, author of an eyewitness account of rural Queensland in the 1880s:

> Sometimes the squatter appoints the best native near his station a 'king', and as a mark of this dignity he gives him a piece of brass containing his civilised name to wear on his breast. In return for food, tobacco, woollen blankets and similar things, the 'king' promises to watch his tribe, and keep them from doing damage to the white man's property. Every native is anxious to become 'king', for the brass plate, which is considered a great ornament, also secures the bearer many a meal. At first, while the natives are more or less dangerous, a chief of this kind may be very valuable to a squatter, who may in this way be warned of attacks from hostile tribes.[16]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] T. Banivanua Mar and P. Edmonds, 'Indigenous and settler relations' in A. Bashford and S. Macintyre, eds, *The Cambridge History of Australia*, Vol. 1 (Port Melbourne, 2013), p. 342.
[14] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887.
[15] M. Fallon, 'Cliefden Conservation Management Plan Final Draft' (Wentworth Falls, 2012), p. 12.
[16] C. Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals: an Account of Four Years Travels in Australia, and of Camp Life with the Aborigines of Queensland* (London, 1889), pp. 363-364.

However, historian Kate Darian-Smith offers a more nuanced explanation, arguing that breastplates served an important diplomatic purpose.[17] She emphasises the fact that Europeans bestowed breastplates on influential Aboriginal men with whom they had brokered alliances. Settlers hoped these Aboriginal men would then be inclined to perform an ambassadorial role, helping to improve communication and circumvent violent resistance. Rothery reminisced about an Aboriginal man he called Jribel, whom he described as 'the chief of my tribe'.[18] Jribel, then, was probably the recipient of a breastplate conferred as an instrument of diplomacy.

While breastplates served a diplomatic purpose, tobacco seems to have served as currency. Rothery wrote that 'they have a great liking for smoking Tobacco. I bought four Black Boys for half a pound of Negro head [tobacco]'.[19] His use of the word 'bought' is ambiguous, but it suggests an economy of goods and obligations, where tobacco was initially an inducement to labour, rather than a reward. Because of its addictive nature, tobacco was also a means of maintaining a ready pool of Aboriginal labour.[20]

Rothery noticed a difference between the adaptability of those Aboriginal men who had reached adulthood before he arrived and those who had not. He described how he 'never could get an adult Black that had been wild to ride but my four Black Boys were always ready to ride bare backed getting up on quiet horses by putting their big toe into the hollow of the horses hock and so upon the rump'.[21] He also wrote that three of the local 'tribe', including Jribel, the 'chief', 'considered themselves part of my establishment … and considered all horses, cattle and sheep with my brand were in their special care'.[22] It is likely then that the 'tribe' Rothery knew did not regard his livestock as a food source, and this would certainly have contributed to peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, there is a suggestion here of a strategy of mutual benefit, whereby Aboriginal people cared for Rothery's stock in order to retain the 'right' to occupy 'his' land and receive his protection.

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[17] K. Darian-Smith, 'Breastplates: Re-enacting Possession in North America and Australia' in K. Darian-Smith and P. Edmonds, eds, *Conciliation on Colonial Frontiers: Conflict, Performance and Commemoration in Australia and the Pacific Rim* (In press, 2014), un-paginated.

[18] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887.

[19] Ibid.

[20] P. Smith, 'Station Camps: Legislation, Labour Relations and Rations on Pastoral Properties in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 24 (2000), p. 81; P. Brock, 'Pastoral Stations and Reserves in South and Central Australia, 1850s-1950s', *Labour History*, Vol. 69 (1995), p. 105.

[21] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887.

[22] Ibid.

The Cliefden station records also offer insights into questions of rations, labour and Aboriginal subsistence. Aboriginal people do not seem to have expected or received rations at Cliefden, at least initially. Rothery wrote that 'their daily bread was the opossum. They could not be got to kill more than satisfied their day's appetite' and 'they eat all snakes but only such as they kill themselves which had not bitten themselves'.[23] If the diet of Aboriginal people on Cliefden station retained traditional elements when Rothery wrote his reminiscences in 1887, then this is consistent with what historian Michael Bennett found to be the case on Alexander Berry's Shoalhaven Estate south of Sydney. Aboriginal people there relied primarily on fishing, hunting and gathering for their subsistence until at least 1860, after which the proportion of traditional means of subsistence did not immediately disappear, but gradually contracted as more intense European land use alienated Aboriginal people further from their land.[24]

Aboriginal people began receiving 'comforts' such as tobacco, tea, sugar and soap at Cliefden Station at least as early as 1835. In April that year, the storekeeper recorded an entry in the daybook that clearly indicates a barter-like exchange: 'Gave to Blacks for Bark' nine figs of tobacco, one pound of sugar and two ounces of tea.[25] The bark may have been required for tanning hides or constructing huts. A second entry, thirteen days after the first, probably involved an exchange, but is less explicit: 'Gave to Blacks' one pound of soap, nine figs of tobacco, three pounds of sugar and eight ounces of tea.[26] Similarly, an entry a little under a year later, in March 1836, states that Samuel Sloane, the sheep overseer, received certain supplies for himself and additional supplies of sugar and tea 'for Blacks'.[27] Aboriginal people on Cliefden may therefore have begun using sugar, tea and tobacco regularly in return for occasional labour within the first three years of the property's establishment.

After the entry in 1836, no further explicit reference to Aboriginal labour or the supply of goods to an Aboriginal person appears in the daybook before entries end in 1842. That is not to say that no Aboriginal person received goods or performed any labour. Jribel was clearly involved in caring for stock on the station and almost certainly received European 'comforts', but his name only appears in Rothery's reminiscences, not in the

[23] Ibid.
[24] M. Bennett, 'For a Labourer Worthy of His Hire: Aboriginal Economic Responses to Colonisation in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, 1770-1900', Vol. 1 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Canberra, 2003), p. i.
[25] Cliefden Station Day Book, ML FM4/6482, entry for 2 April 1835.
[26] Ibid., entry for 15 April 1835.
[27] Ibid., entry for 31 March 1836.

official station records. Nor do the station records always identify Aboriginal people explicitly. As time went on, those who maintained the station records gradually dropped the use of the term 'Black', except to distinguish between two people working on the station with the same name. Furthermore, the daybook is not complete, and may be missing those pages containing entries similar to those already described.

After the 1835-1842 daybooks, the next volume in the Cliefden archive is the ledger that begins in 1849, but no entry referring explicitly to Aboriginal labour appears until 1852. One possible explanation is the more personalised nature of the ledger. The main purpose of the daybook was to record rewards given for one-off jobs, piecework or work done outside of normal work hours. For example, in October 1835, the daybook indicates that men named Wallace and Reardon (possibly assigned convicts) received bonuses of tobacco, sugar and tea for 'extra work'.[28] The main purpose of the ledger, on the other hand, was to record the value of items drawn from the station store that would be deducted from the agreed salary at the end of the agreement period. If Aboriginal people were not entering into full-time labour agreements, then their names and the supplies they received are unlikely to appear in the ledger.

Another possible explanation for the limited number of entries in the ledger referring to Aboriginal people before 1852 is the continuation of their traditional seasonal lifestyle, though undoubtedly somewhat curtailed by the expanding grid of pastoral properties. The following excerpt from Rothery's reminiscences makes it clear that, while he valued their labour, 'his' 'Blacks' were free to come and go as they pleased:

> They were always wandering about the country of their Tribe. They would not live in Huts preferring camping out under sheets of Bark and constantly shifting about … They were constantly at war [with adjoining tribes] through stealing gins by main for their style of marriage. Some of my Blacks had 5 gins, few less than 2. They all camped together ... [The four 'Black Boys' I 'bought'] only left me when the tribe went away to a distance and on its return came back to me till on one expedition of the tribe to fight the Lachlan Blacks three of them were killed … The fourth Boy is alive still [in 1887] but so great a drunk I cannot keep him. His gin is worse than himself. But for the drink his wonderful tracking would have found him a home here.[29]

[28] Ibid., entries for 6 and 12 October 1835.
[29] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887.

As long as Aboriginal people practised their 'wandering' lifestyle, they maintained their traditional subsistence and remained only a reserve pool of casual labour at Cliefden.

In 1848, the Colonial Office retained the naïve hope that the implementation of a system of fourteen-year pastoral leases beyond the Nineteen Counties would not deprive Aboriginal people of maintaining their traditional subsistence. In a Dispatch to Governor FitzRoy at that time, Earl Grey wrote:

> I think it essential that it should be generally understood that leases granted for this purpose give the grantees only an exclusive right of pasturage for their cattle, and of cultivating such Land as they may require within the large limits thus assigned to them; but that these Leases are not intended to deprive the natives of their former right to hunt over these Districts, or to wander over them in search of subsistence, in the manner to which they have been heretofore accustomed, from the spontaneous produce of the soil, except over land actually cultivated or fenced in for that purpose.[30]

Historian Robert Foster lists three advantages to allowing Aboriginal people to wander over pastoral lands in search of subsistence: Firstly, it provided a convenient source of labour; secondly, it subsidised the cost of labour; and thirdly, the services of Aboriginal people could be utilised and dispensed with at will, without the risk of permanent loss.[31] Rothery would almost certainly have been mindful of such advantages. In addition, given the traditional diet of the local Aborigines, he probably also considered an Aboriginal presence as a practical, inexpensive and effective means of controlling the number of snakes, possums and kangaroos on the property, thus reducing the risk of snakebite, fruit loss in the orchard, and competition for pasture. Furthermore, it may have eased any sense of guilt he might have felt for having taken over Aboriginal land.

The arrival of gold prospectors in the districts around Cliefden Station from 1851 had no obvious impact on the mobility of the local Aboriginal population. A correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in June 1851 that:

> Nearly all the Cowra, Carcoar, and Molong blacks are encamped at the diggings, together with their gins and piccanninies [*sic*], and I believe these sable gentlemen make a good thing of it, by cutting bark, bringing firewood and water, and looking after stray horses. Their tastes have become rather refined of late, and cigars seem to be quite the rage with them.[32]

[30] Grey to FitzRoy, 11 February 1848, *Historical Records of Australia,* Series I, Vol. XXVI, p. 224.
[31] Foster, 'Rations, coexistence, and the colonisation of Aboriginal labour', p. 19.
[32] 'Orange', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1851, p. 3.

As Cliefden Station is located within the geographic triangle marked by Cowra, Carcoar and Molong, the group at the diggings probably included those Aboriginal people who sometimes camped on the station. At this early stage of the gold rush, the fact that Aboriginal people in the district seem to have been more inclined to follow Europeans to the goldfields than to remain on the properties where pastoralists could have used their labour is significant. Their presence on the goldfields could be the reason why the gold rush did not immediately lead to an increase in Aboriginal employment on Cliefden. This contrasts with the situation in the southern parts of the colony of South Australia, where many pastoralists relied heavily on Aboriginal labour 'for a period of time during the 1850s', as a result of the exodus of European labour to the goldfields.[33]

From 1852, however, the Cliefden station ledger again provides evidence of the presence of Aboriginal men. It also provides clear evidence of Aboriginal acculturation, with individual Aboriginal men identified by Anglophonic names, instances of their receiving payment by cheque, and evidence that they were using razors and wearing clothes. A man identified as 'Billy (blackfellow)' received a razor and 'Dick (blackfellow)' received a shirt from the station store in December 1852, while 'Billy (blackfellow)' received a cheque for fifteen shillings four months later.[34] In 1857, 'Black Dick' went to the station store on several occasions for various items, including soap, tobacco, boots, shirts and trousers, and twice received cheques for £1.[35] Another Aboriginal man, Bobindi, went to the station store for similar items and received one cheque for £1 in 1857.[36] This suggests that Aboriginal people on Cliefden Station adopted some European customs and engaged in at least occasional paid labour there within a single generation, but there is no evidence of an Aboriginal person receiving rations or engaging in full-time labour before 1863.

The station ledger shows that Jackey Sloane was the first person of Aboriginal descent to enter into a full-time labour agreement.[37] He arrived at Cliefden with a wife and young children in 1863 and agreed to work as a stockman at the rate of £30 for twelve months plus the standard rations and shelter.[38] His wage and conditions were identical to those granted to Henry Butters, the stockman who preceded him from 1860 to 1862, and to

[33] Foster, 'Rations, coexistence, and the colonisation of Aboriginal labour', p. 2.
[34] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, ML FM4/6483, pp. 235 and 490.
[35] Ibid., p. 195.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 403.
[38] Ancestry.com: Family history of Gayle Downey and others; Ledger, ibid.

European shepherds and grooms on Cliefden in 1863.[39] In other words, the same wages and conditions applied to Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees and a range of occupations on Cliefden at the same time.

This contrasts with what historians have found to be the case in other locations. Margaret Rodwell found that on Ollera, a pastoral station near Glen Innes in the New England region of New South Wales, Aboriginal workers consistently received lower wages than European workers did during the 1860s.[40] A similar situation existed on Alexander Berry's Shoalhaven Estate south of Sydney, where Michael Bennett argues the pastoralist paid Aboriginal people less than he paid Europeans because he believed that the Aboriginal workers could 'look after themselves'.[41] In such a case, the pastoralist was taking advantage of Aboriginal subsistence to subsidise the colonial economy. Rothery evidently viewed Aboriginal labour from a different perspective.

The Cliefden ledger does not identify Jackey Sloane as Aboriginal, but the name 'Jackey' was the ubiquitous pastoral 'moniker' for Aboriginal men, and copies of letters written by Rothery in May 1877, 1878 and 1879 identify him as 'half-caste'.[42] Rothery wrote these letters to the senior police sergeant in Cowra on behalf of Jackey Sloane and other Aboriginal people on Cliefden, requesting the annual supply of blankets to which they were entitled. The practice of issuing blankets to 'worthy' Aborigines had been customary since Governor Macquarie instituted it in 1814. Magistrates and settlers had been responsible for their distribution since 1835. Having been a magistrate since 1838, Rothery would have had many years' experience in the distribution of blankets to Aborigines. He would have considered this his duty and an act of benevolence.

[39] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, pp. 656 and 663.
[40] Rodwell, 'Figures in the Landscape', p. 27.
[41] Bennett, 'For a Labourer Worthy of His Hire', p. 159.
[42] W. Montagu Rothery to Senior Constable McCarthy, 23 May 1877, 24 May 1878, 28 May 1879 and 23 May 1880, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1876-1883, ML FM4/6453.

Figure 4. Double page from the Cliefden Station ledger 1849-1870, with entries for Francis Wright and John Smith on the left, and Jackey Sloane and Charles Bradley on the right

However, close scrutiny of the station ledger between 1878 and 1880 reveals that Rothery passed the cost of carriage on to the recipients of the blankets in the first two, but not the third, of those three years. In June 1878, for example, Rothery entered debits for the carriage of blankets against the names of Neddy Collet, Jackey Sloane, and Jackey's brother, Dickey, for five shillings, 3s.6d and 1s.6d respectively.[43] While this might suggest parsimony on Rothery's part, there is a likely explanation. New South Wales was in the grip of a serious drought in 1878 and 1879, prompting a newspaper columnist to ask in 1879, 'Do any of our readers remember, in history, a similar wide extension of droughts to that which has occurred within the years since 1874 to the present time?'[44] Rothery had earlier reported to his wool agents that 'nothing since the drought of 1837, 1838 & 1839 has equalled it'.[45] Perhaps the losses Rothery incurred, or the fear of potential loss due to the drought, curtailed his inclination or capacity for benevolence at that time.

The letters applying for blankets are not the only evidence that Rothery acted on the Aborigines' behalf. In November 1877, Rothery wrote to the police sergeant at Carcoar explaining the circumstances surrounding the death of Jackey and Maryanne Sloane's married daughter:

> In the matter of the death of Jane Cooper neither myself or any resident of Cliefden have the most distant notion of foul play. She had been ill more or less ever since her confinement [four months ago]. Some two months since we heard she caught cold. Since then we heard she went into the creek gathering watercress and then changed her wet boots and became much worse. Owing to her being unable to attend to her baby herself she was removed at Cooper's request from the Bridge Hut to her parents' at Penny Royal [Hut] about a fortnight since. She continued ill as we were informed until today just after Cooper left Cliefden to go to see Dr Smith about her we heard of her death. Having no suspicion soever of anything wrong she was buried at Penny Royal on Sunday afternoon I reading the Burial service over her. I am informed by Constable Finlay that all suspicion was removed from his mind in his talking to Jackey Sloane & his wife this evening.[46]

In this instance, Rothery seems to have acted on behalf of the Sloane family in order to save them any unnecessary distress.

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[43] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, ML FM4/6483, three separate entries for 29 June 1878.
[44] 'The Drought Period', *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 June 1879, p. 12S.
[45] W. Montagu Rothery to C. Balme & Co, 13 February 1878, Cliefden Station Letterpress Copybook, ML FM4/6453.
[46] W. Montagu Rothery to Sergeant Wood, about 20 November 1877, Cliefden Station Letterpress Copybook, ML FM4/6453.

As well as indicating that Rothery acted on the Aborigines' behalf, the aforementioned letters requesting blankets effectively constitute for the historian a kind of census of Indigenous people on the station. Copies of four similar letters survive, dating from 1877 to 1880. Rothery identified individual Aborigines by name in each letter, identified their relationships to one another, and described them as being in his service. The 1877 letter names twelve 'half-casts', including Jackey Sloane, his wife, his brother, Jackey's two sons, six daughters and a granddaughter. The 1878 letter names sixteen 'half-castes and Blacks', including a second granddaughter of Jackey and Maryanne Sloane, and a family of three 'Blacks', none of whose names appear in the earlier letter. The 1879 letter names the same family of three 'Blacks' and the same three generations of the Sloane family, with the addition of another son to Jackey and Maryanne Sloane. The 1880 letter names only one 'half-caste' - Jackey's eldest son, Johnny Sloane - and the same family of three 'Blacks' with the addition of another son. The letters confirm that the same Aboriginal people were not constantly present on the same property. Had earlier letters or letterpress copybooks survived, it might have been possible to track the number, identity and relationships of Aboriginal people on the property from the beginning of the period of Rothery's occupation.

The ledgers and station diaries show that members of the Sloane family performed a variety of tasks on-and-off over more than twenty years. Jackey Sloane agreed to work for a twelve-month period as a stockman from 21 April 1863, and, before his agreement expired, he engaged in shearing for fifty-five days, extending his contract to 16 June 1864.[47] The ledger states that he absconded from Cliefden early in May with thirty-eight days still to do as a stockman.[48] This is the only instance in which the word 'absconded' appears on the station record of an Aboriginal worker. Rothery clearly did not classify an Aboriginal person's absence as absconding unless he or she had entered into a formal full-time labour agreement. Moreover, Jackey Sloane cannot have been absent for long and must have been welcomed back, as the station diary shows a payment made to him in September the following year for breaking in eighteen colts, a task that probably required all of the sixteen months between the date on which he 'absconded' and the date of payment.[49] In fact, the payment included a 'gift' or bonus of £3.3s, which suggests that Rothery was particularly satisfied with the quality and/or efficiency of his work.

[47] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, ML FM4/6483, p. 403.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Cliefden Station Diary 1865-1866, ML FM4/6481, two separate entries for 8 September 1865.

After paying Jackey Sloane for breaking in the colts, Rothery hired both Jackey and Maryanne Sloane to look after 893 ewes nearing lambing down.[50] He paid them £4.12s.1d forty days later, after which they seem to have left Cliefden for about two years.[51] When they returned in 1868, Jackey engaged in horse breaking again for the first half of the year, followed by an unspecified period cutting bark.[52] He and his family then seem to have gone elsewhere for another two years, after which Rothery hired both Jackey and his brother, Dickey, at a rate of ten shillings each per week.[53] Over the subsequent six months their duties varied between lamb-shearing, footrotting, searching for lost sheep, shepherding and helping drive three fat bullocks to their purchaser.[54] They were obviously versatile and reliable workers.

While Jackey then left Cliefden for five years, Dickey, his brother, left and returned within six months.[55] Between January and June 1872 he went out searching for lost sheep ten times with two or three of Rothery's sons, and also served as a relief shepherd and bark cutter.[56] The fact that he spent so much time with Rothery's sons suggests a harmonious working relationship.

Jackey and Maryanne Sloane and their family returned to Cliefden in 1876, but Maryanne probably arrived ahead of the rest of the family, as she appears to have been the first to be hired. She worked in an unspecified role for six shillings per week between March and July that year.[57] This was the same wage paid to a sixteen-year-old European female kitchen assistant hired a few weeks after Maryanne's employment ended, and no less than the lowest wage paid to other women on the station at that time, all of whom seem to have been European.[58] The highest paid woman was the cook, who earned ten shillings per week.[59] Maryanne worked for seventeen weeks, and despite her pay being at the lower end of the scale, she finished in credit for £4.1s.8d after having her station store debt of £1.0s.4d deducted.[60]

[50] Ibid., entry for 9 September 1865.
[51] Ibid., entry for 19 October 1865.
[52] Cliefden Station Daybook 1868-1876, ML FM4/6482, entries for 25 May and 3 July 1868.
[53] Ibid., entry for 29 December 1870.
[54] Ibid, entries for 10, 28 and 30 January 1871, 10, 22, 24 and 26 May 1871and 6 June 1871.
[55] Ibid., entry for 22 January 1871.
[56] Ibid., various entries between 22 January and 9 June 1872.
[57] Ibid., entries for 7 March and 4 July 1876.
[58] Ibid., entry for 19 August 1876.
[59] Ibid., entry for 10 July 1875.
[60] Ibid., entry for 4 July 1876.

When her husband, Jackey, returned to work at Cliefden in September the same year, he was employed as a shepherd and watchman.[61] Once again, his wage was £30 per annum, the same wage his European son-in-law agreed to on the same day for the same kind of work, and about double the wage his wife had been earning.[62] Jackey's two sons, Johnny and Dickey, aged nineteen and ten respectively, started working on the station at the same time, Johnny as a shepherd, and Dickey as a boundary rider on 'Tommy the Baggy Horse'.[63] Being older, and probably with some years' experience gained on other properties, Johnny earned the same wage his father earned, but young Dickey was probably a novice and began by earning only a ration. Jackey continued working as a shepherd and watchman until December 1879, after which his name and those of his wife and most of their children disappear from the station records. Before their departure, however, Jackey and Maryanne Sloane added another son to their family, naming him Samuel Cliefden Sloane.[64] Their choice of name and their long association with Cliefden suggest a high level of goodwill toward Rothery and the station.

Apart from Maryanne Sloane's brief periods of work in 1865 and 1876, the only clear evidence of paid female Aboriginal labour on Cliefden Station refers to two of her daughters. The station ledger shows that nineteen-year-old Mary Sloane received £2.10s for '150 packs @ 4d per pack' in October 1879, and £1 six weeks later, just before her family's departure.[65] The ledger entry does not specify the nature of Mary's work, but a letter found in the letterpress copybook suggests she was making woolpacks. Rothery wrote the letter to David Jones and Co. in Sydney about two months before Mary received her first pay cheque, requesting a large quantity of wool-bagging cloth and sewing twine, and stating that he found it best to make his woolpacks at Cliefden.[66] The proceeds of Mary's casual piecework over a three-month period no doubt made a welcome contribution to the family income.

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[61] Ibid., entry for 26 September 1876.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid. and 23 and 30 October 1876.
[64] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887; NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages: Birth certificate, Samuel Cliefden Sloane, born 24 August 1878, registration number 10887/1878.
[65] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, ML FM4/6483, entries for 22 October and 4 December 1879; Calculated from Mary's age as recorded on her mother's death certificate. NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages: Death certificate of Mary[anne] Sloane, died 14 October 1913, Registration number 1913/18284.
[66] W. Montagu Rothery to Messrs David Jones & Co., 24 August 1879, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook, ML FM4/6453.

Figure 5. Mary Gage née Sloane (1859-1946) as a grandmother - Used with permission of Natasha Gage.

Mary's younger sister, Alice, first engaged in paid employment on Cliefden in her parents' absence about two years later, shortly after her newly-married brother, Johnny, returned to work there. Alice was then aged about seventeen.[67] None of the station records is explicit about her wage rate or the nature of her work. Various entries indicate that she went to the station store on several occasions for dressmaking materials, boots, hose and stays, received cheques for amounts between £1.15s.0d and £4.0s on five occasions, and received a final cheque for £2.15s in May 1883.[68] The sum of Alice's debits and credits over the period of her service indicates she was earning £15 per annum, a wage rate similar to that earned by her mother a few years earlier. The lack of any deductions made for food items suggests she found her rations adequate. However, the ledger shows that her brother paid for one pair of her boots.[69] He also regularly purchased food, which he may have shared with his sister.

There is little definitive evidence of people of full Aboriginal descent entering into full-time employment on Cliefden. This is a consequence of both the incomplete nature of the station archive and the general use of Anglophonic names for Aboriginal people, making it difficult to identify Aboriginal people with certainty. Rothery's letters, however, identify Neddy Collet or Nittabed, and his son, Edward or 'Young Neddy', as 'Blacks', as distinguished from 'Half-castes'.[70] Like the Sloane family, the Collet family seem to have originated from somewhere other than Cliefden, only arriving on the station in the middle of 1877. Both the older and younger Neddy remained employed there for more than nine years, working in various capacities including boundary riding, tracking lost and

[67] Calculated from Alice's age in 1913, as recorded on her mother's death certificate. Death certificate of Mary[anne] Sloane.
[68] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, entries for 26 November and 9 December 1881, 21 March, 10 October, 2 December 1882, 8 February, 8 May and 23 May 1883.
[69] Ibid., entries for 26 November and 9 December 1881.
[70] W. Montagu Rothery to Senior Constable McCarthy, 24 May 1878, 28 May 1879 and 23 May 1880, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1876-1883, ML FM4/6453.

stolen sheep and shearing.[71] They left Cliefden in September 1886 for an unknown, but probably not far distant destination.[72] The duration and variety of their service on Cliefden suggests that they, like the Sloane family, were reliable and versatile workers.

After the Collet family's departure, Johnny Sloane was the only identifiable Aboriginal worker remaining at Cliefden, but his departure soon followed. He and his wife and children left the station on good terms in February 1887.[73] It seems they went to join Johnny's parents, who were living some thirty-five miles to the north-west, near Eugowra. Jackey Sloane had won a tender to deliver mail on horseback in the area three times a week for three years for an annual salary of £60, double the wage he had earned at Cliefden, but probably without rations and shelter.[74] When Jackey's contract ended, Johnny won the subsequent tender, but at a lower annual salary of £50, still more than the wage he had earned at Cliefden, but again, probably without weekly rations or shelter.[75] Weekly rations at Cliefden were 10 lb flour, 10 lb meat, 2 lb sugar and ¼ lb tea, the Australian bush standard.[76] A single man received a single ration and a married couple received 1½ rations. The latter was worth £24.7s.6d over the course of fifty-two weeks at Cliefden station store prices in 1880. Jackey Sloane may therefore have been financially better off delivering mail, but Johnny was not.

Johnny's departure seems to have marked the end of Aboriginal labour on Cliefden. It coincided with declining labour needs on the station, due primarily to the installation of fences, and it occurred just a few months before Rothery wrote his reminiscences about the 'Blacks' he had known. Rothery finished his reminiscences by recounting: 'When I have met Blacks in the Bush I had never seen and had never seen me they stared at me then with a smile said "Mr Rothery". I had been well described to them'.[77] As well as maintaining a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship, Rothery was clearly fond of the Aboriginal

[71] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, entries for 9 January 1878, 24 July 1880, 20 November 1880, 25 July 1882, 6 and 8 January 1886, 8 and 11 September 1886; W. Montagu Rothery to Sergeant McCarthy, 19 September 1882, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook, ML FM4/6454.
[72] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, entry for 11 September 1886; P. Read, *Down there with me on the Cowra Mission* (Sydney, 1984), p. 125, includes an oral account by a descendant of Neddy Collet, Kevin Collet, who was living on the Erambie Aboriginal Reserve at Cowra, about forty kilometres from Cliefden, in 1979. Erambie had been an unmanaged reserve since the Aborigines Protection Board established it in 1891.
[73] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, entry for 16 February 1887.
[74] 'Conveyance of Mails', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1886, p. 10.
[75] 'Conveyance of Mails', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1889, p. 4.
[76] W. Montagu Rothery to Emily Devine, 24 April 1894 and Agreement between Henry Devine and W. Montagu Rothery, 2 May 1894, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1894-1897, ML FM4/3650; M. Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A history of eating in Australia* (Adelaide, 1982), p. 27.
[77] W. Montagu Rothery to unnamed recipient, undated entry between letters dated 10 and 12 October 1887, Cliefden Letterpress Copybook 1883-1887.

people he knew, and they of him. His practice of allowing Aboriginal people to come and go unhindered – until they wanted to engage in full-time employment – undoubtedly contributed to the success of the relationship. So too did his practice of paying male and female Aboriginal workers the same wages as European workers engaged in the same or similar work.

By drawing on the rich Cliefden Station archive and other sources, this chapter has documented the day-to-day station lives of Aboriginal people, their movement from traditional Aboriginal patterns of life to increasing participation in the European colonial economy, and their relationship with William Montagu Rothery from his arrival in 1832 to 1887. It has revealed one of the 'previously hidden stories' historian Ann McGrath called for, clearly contradicting the racist stereotype of Aboriginal people as reluctant and unreliable workers by detailing the range of tasks they performed and the highly valuable contribution they made to the running of the station. The Aborigines of Cliefden Station, both male and female, were friendly and very useful to the end.

Chapter Two

'We are just now in a most wonderfully precarious position': Chinese labour on Cliefden

> It is up to the historian to review this mythical figure, and see the part Chinese played in the history of labour, at least in the pastoral [industry], even if this means upsetting some well-established theories.[1]

Since historian Leslie Marchant made this statement more than fifty years ago, knowledge of the part played by the Chinese in pastoral Australia has gradually increased. As this chapter will reveal, there is yet more to learn. This chapter contributes to the historiography of the little-known Chinese presence in pastoral New South Wales between 1853 and 1883 by drawing particularly on the rich Cliefden Station archive and a collection of letters by William Montagu Rothery held in the National Library of New Zealand.[2] The letters that are used in this chapter pre-date those in Rothery's letterpress copybooks that the Mitchell Library microfilmed in 1975. The Cliefden Station archive provides evidence that sheds light on the experiences of un-indentured Chinese on a pastoral station close to bustling goldfields in central western New South Wales. It reveals a history of Chinese participation in the pastoral industry that is in some ways at variance with the history uncovered elsewhere in New South Wales.

Historian John Fitzgerald has estimated that around ten thousand Chinese arrived in the Australian colonies before 1850, and approximately sixty- to ninety-thousand arrived between 1851 and 1900.[3] Chinese immigrants began trickling into New South Wales early in the nineteenth century to work as cooks, cabinetmakers and market gardeners.[4] In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Chinese and Australian agents imported more than three thousand indentured Chinese men to work on pastoral properties in order to help fill a shortfall of labour exacerbated by the cessation of convict transportation.[5] From 1853, Chinese men streamed into Victoria, New South Wales, and then Queensland, to join the gold rushes.

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[1] L. R. Marchant, 'Shepherds in Buckram: An Episode in the History of the Chinese in Australia', *Westerly*, Vol. 1, Parts 2-3, November 1962, p. 124.
[2] National Library of New Zealand: Crawford Family Papers, MS-Papers-1001-10035.
[3] J. Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney, 2007), p. 62.
[4] J. Wilton, *Golden Threads: the Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850-1950* (Armidale, 2004), p. 9.
[5] Ibid.

The discovery of gold in Australia in 1851 caused pastoralists great alarm, particularly because of the disruption they anticipated to their labour supply. A series of letters written by William Montagu Rothery to his friend James Coutts Crawford between 1851 and 1853 conveys his consternation. Rothery wrote to Crawford twelve days after the proclamation of Edward Hargraves' discovery of gold near Bathurst in May 1851, exclaiming:

> Gold Diggins[6] in NSW!!! I wish they had never been found. They will cost me some 3 or £400 more in the expenses of my establishment … Half of Sydney is on its way up … The colony seems suddenly maddened. Stock will be left to its own care. It is fatal to the settlers …[7]

In his next letter to Crawford, Rothery continued:

> This Gold Racket when it settles down will do good perhaps but at present it is increasing our expenses much. How the sheep washing and shearing will be got thro' remains to be seen … I have not been there [to the goldfields] as yet fearing my servants will follow my example … What will become of the sheep farmers remains to be told in another year … The sheep owners will be wiped off if this goes on and the country will with them go to the D---l and become like all Gold countries - miserable. We are just now in a most wonderfully precarious position.[8]

When Rothery wrote again nine months later, he remained apprehensive: 'I am still in the wool producing line as when you left [in 1848], indeed we are all as we were, but undergoing great anxiety as to how to manage our labor [*sic*] matters'.[9] Four months later, in July 1852, the labour situation was dire: 'All here are fairly frightened at the probability of having no labor at all. Unless labor comes quickly farewell to NSW and all in it'.[10] At this time, it is probable that Rothery had little idea where the necessary labour might come from.

An editorial had appeared in the *Bathurst Free Press* a few weeks earlier, complaining about the failure of the government to subsidise emigration from Britain in order to ease the labour shortage. The newspaper reported that Aborigines had been employed in 'some districts', while in others 'the importation of Chinese has been

[6] The term 'gold diggins' was widely used in reference to the Californian gold rush before it was applied in the Australian context. In 1849, various New South Wales newspapers, for example, reproduced 'A Few Days at the Diggins', originally published as 'A Few Days in the Diggins' in *Punch*, 13 January 1849, p. 20.
[7] W. Montagu Rothery to James Coutts Crawford, 26 May 1851, Crawford Family Papers.
[8] Ibid., 15 June 1851.
[9] Ibid., 20 March 1852.
[10] Ibid., 4 July 1852.

extensively carried on to supply the deficiency caused by the general tendency towards the diggings'.[11] Referring to the Chinese, it continued:

> Under desperate circumstances that labour has been introduced into the colony, and detestable as the presence of such a degraded race may be, and hateful as is the thought of its introduction, the evil is one of those whose removal is practicable, if the means which ought to be at our disposal were employed for that purpose.[12]

The newspaper clearly considered the employment of Chinese labour as an objectionable last resort.

At the end of the 1852/53 shearing season, Rothery managed to recruit one of his European shearers as a shepherd, but that solution failed when the shearer absconded after six weeks.[13] A few months later Rothery reported to Crawford, 'Labor if you want a shepherd not to be obtained. I have had to double and double my flocks'.[14] This was a common cry in the colony that year. In March 1853, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that in the New England area 'Shepherds are at present much required; several of the settlers have been obliged to throw two and three flocks into one'.[15]

In June 1853, Rothery wrote to Crawford about Arthur Hodgson, who had 'purchased his partner out and has been driving a great trade but with Chinamen a very risky one'.[16] Rothery clearly had reservations about using Chinese labour. Nevertheless, his first Chinese employee, Chum Loo, began working on Cliefden as a lamb minder at the beginning of the lambing season in September 1853.[17] Under the circumstances, Rothery's options were limited. However, he acted cautiously, initially engaging Chum Loo on a week-by-week basis at fifteen shillings per week, the equivalent of £39 per annum or £19.10s.0d for six months.[18] This was a high wage when compared with other shepherds engaged on Cliefden Station around the same time. A month after Chum Loo started work,

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[11] 'Labour and Emigration', *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 12 May 1852, p. 2.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, ML FM4/6483, p. 271.
[14] W. Montagu Rothery to J. C. Crawford, 14 June 1853, Crawford Family Papers.
[15] 'News from the Interior: New England', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1853, p. 2.
[16] W. Montagu Rothery to J. C. Crawford, 14 June 1853, Crawford Family Papers. Crawford was the partner Hodgson bought out. (See National Library of Australia: Diary of J. C. Crawford, entry for 17 April 1845, Crawford Family Papers, AJCP microform collection.) By August 1854, when Hodgson was seeking to represent the County of Stanley, he found it politic to claim that he 'would never … import another Chinaman as long as he lived'. See 'Nomination for the County of Stanley', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1854, p. 8.
[17] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 155.
[18] Ibid.

another shepherd, Thomas Colman, agreed to a wage of £13 for six months.[19] Six months earlier, three shepherds, George Sheedy, Mathew Price and William Varney, had renewed pre-existing agreements, accepting the same wage of £13 for six months.[20] In fact, Sheedy continued shepherding on Cliefden for nine years, never earning more than £30 per annum.[21] In this context, Chum Loo's wage rate seems to be an aberration and requires more exploration.

After what appears to have been a trial period of three months, the gap between Chum Loo's wage rate and that of other shepherds on Cliefden widened. Chum Loo agreed to shepherd a large flock of 1727 ewes and lambs for £24 for six months, an increase of about fifteen shillings per month.[22] Other shepherds who were responsible for flocks of more than 1000 sheep on Cliefden at that time received £26 per year and an extra £2 per year for every 100 sheep over 1000. At that rate, Chum Loo would have been entitled to only £20.2s.6d for six months, £3.17s.6d less than what Rothery agreed to pay him. Why Rothery paid Chum Loo more than he paid his European shepherds is puzzling. Perhaps Chum Loo brought glowing references or was multi-skilled. Unfortunately, the records provide no evidence.

When compared with the wages of his indentured compatriots shepherding elsewhere in New South Wales at the same time, Chum Loo's wage rate seems even more extraordinary. As Darnell has recently shown, indentured Chinese shepherds employed on Eidsvold Station, about 430 kilometres north of present-day Brisbane, received £18 per annum in 1853.[23] According to Margaret Rodwell, indentured Chinese labourers working on Ollera Station, near Glen Innes in the New England area of New South Wales, received a paltry £7.4s per annum in 1853.[24] Arthur Hodgson's Chinese shepherds on Eton Vale on the Darling Downs received £9 in the first year of their five-year indenture period, rising to £27 in the fifth year.[25] There was clearly no standard wage rate for shepherds across colonial New South Wales, whether indentured or not.

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[19] Ibid., p. 264.
[20] Ibid., pp. 71, 188 and 263.
[21] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, pp. 313, 326, 361, 371 and 377.
[22] Ledger 1849-1870, pp. 155 and 180.
[23] M. Darnell, 'Life and Labour for Indentured Chinese Shepherds in New South Wales, 1847-1855', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol.6 (2004), p. 154.
[24] M. Rodwell, 'Figures in the Landscape: The Experience of the Least Visible Workers on a New England Pastoral Station, 1850-1900', *Labour History*, No. 103 (November 2012), p. 26.
[25] V. V. Donovan, 'From Queensland Squatter to English Squire: Arthur Hodgson and the Colonial Gentry, 1840-1870' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1994), p. 64.

Darnell found that even after their periods of indenture had expired, Chinese shepherds in the northern pastoral districts received wages that were lower than those paid to their European counterparts on the same stations.[26] Why Rothery paid Chum Loo more than he paid his European shepherds is therefore even more difficult to explain. If it were simply an indication of desperation, then Rothery would have found it necessary to pay European shepherds equally high wages. Perhaps it was his way of reducing what he saw as the 'risk' of employing Chinese labour. Examination of additional pastoral station records might reveal whether positive financial discrimination towards un-indentured Chinese shepherds was more widespread or if Chum Loo's case is an isolated one.

The success of Rothery's first experience with a Chinese shepherd seems to have mitigated his concerns sufficiently to persuade him to repeat the experiment. Examination of the Cliefden Station ledger reveals that four Chinese shepherds, Sam, Biar, Gedeong and Amoy, joined his workforce in the last week of March 1855, seven months after Chum Loo's departure.[27] Their wage rate was identical to that of European shepherds engaged on Cliefden the same year, again differing from what Darnell found to have occurred in the northern pastoral districts.

The result of employing the four Chinese shepherds in 1855 was comparatively unsuccessful, as three of them absconded. The station ledger shows that Sam absconded after serving two months and five days of his six-month agreement, with a debit equal to his earnings after losing '40-odd lambs after washing'.[28] Biar left without collecting his pay three months after renewing his agreement, when he was evidently in credit for £6.9s.7d.[29] He may have lost some sheep and decided to leave before anyone noticed. Gedeong absconded on an unknown date with an unknown balance.[30] Only Amoy left after the expiration of his six-month agreement, and with £5.2s.6d, the balance of his wages. He would have been £9 better off had he not lost thirty-six sheep.[31] Neither unexpected departures nor the loss of sheep was unusual, but the rate of sudden departure and loss of sheep was greater in this group than was usually the case.

[26] Darnell, 'Life and Labour for Indentured Chinese Shepherds', pp. 155-156.
[27] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, pp. 305-308.
[28] Ibid., p. 305.
[29] Ibid., p. 306.
[30] Ibid. p. 308.
[31] Ibid.

This relatively unsuccessful episode seems to have temporarily deterred Rothery from employing Chinese shepherds, as none appears in the station records between 1856 and 1858. Thereafter, however, at least one and as many as six Chinese shepherds were present almost every year until 1883. The last Chinese shepherd left on 24 January 1883, after which Rothery had no further need for shepherds owing to the installation of fences.[32] As he wrote to Crawford a few days after the last Chinese shepherd's departure, 'shepherding has vanished'.[33]

Significantly, there is no evidence in the Cliefden Station records, local newspapers or the New South Wales *Police Gazette* that Rothery took out warrants for Sam, Biar, Gedeong or another three Chinese shepherds who absconded at other times. On the other hand, he had no hesitation taking out warrants for six European shepherds and/or hutkeepers who absconded over a two-month period shortly after the proclamation of Hargraves' gold discovery four years earlier.[34] Four of those men had small credit balances, another had a nil balance and the other was in debt for £10.15s.9d after having lost sixty-three lambs.[35] Darnell found that station owners in the northern districts 'rarely' prosecuted cases of absconding Chinese labourers.[36] She surmises that the appearance, language skills and geographical isolation of most Chinese labourers deterred them from absconding, as it would have been difficult for them to travel far 'without their presence being noted and questioned', and few of them consequently absconded.[37] This, however, does not explain why Rothery did not attempt to prosecute Chinese labourers who clearly did abscond, despite the likelihood of their detection.

In fact, the police never found the Chinese shepherd for whom Rothery took out a warrant, whereas they did find a European shepherd for whom he took out a warrant on the same day. The station diary provides details of the circumstances of this case. On 21 December 1865, two weeks before he absconded, Rothery received a report that Ah Kan's flock was 'looking bad' in the yard at ten o'clock in the morning.[38] The sheep overseer and an assistant went to investigate and found the flock as reported, without its shepherd. They also found that Ah Kan's belongings were in his hut, suggesting that he had not absconded.

[32] Cliefden Station Ledger 1877-1895, ML FM4/6483, p. 173.
[33] W. Montagu Rothery to J.C. Crawford, 29 January 1883.
[34] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, pp. 282-183.
[35] Ibid., p. 206.
[36] Darnell, *The Chinese Labour Trade*, p. 287.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Cliefden Station Diary 1865-1866, ML FM4/6481, entry for 21 December 1865.

Nevertheless, Ah Kan was not in sight. The flock was taken out to water and feed and returned at sundown, but as Ah Kan was still absent, the flock was put in another shepherd's care.

According to the station diary, Ah Kan returned at sundown the following day and the relieving shepherd gave him the flock, but thirteen days later Rothery received a report that Ah Kan had definitely absconded.[39] This time, twenty-three ewes and lambs lay dead in the yard and others were dying. Rothery took out warrants the next day for Ah Kan and a European shepherd, Samuel Becket, who had absconded twelve days earlier.[40] Despite having been gone so long, Beckett was apprehended, tried, found guilty, and given a choice between paying a £5 fine or spending fourteen days in gaol if he did not return to Rothery's service.[41] He chose to go to gaol.[42] Ah Kan, meanwhile, was able to avoid detection. While this is only a single case, it casts doubt on Darnell's hypothesis.

The year 1866 was not the best time to be looking for work in rural Australia. Labour supply and demand had stabilised after the initial gold rush, and by April 1864 there were reports of labour being 'considerably in excess of the demand' in New South Wales.[43] Newspaper reports indicate that wage rates for shepherds fell from £35-40 in 1864 to £30-35 in 1867.[44] Rodwell found that on Ollera Station in northern New South Wales, Chinese shepherds earned 'about £40 per annum' by 'the mid-1860s'.[45] At the same time, all shepherds at Cliefden earned £30, but they could earn another £9 per annum for watching sheep overnight, something that every Chinese shepherd engaged at Cliefden between 1862 and 1867 agreed to do. This suggests that Chinese shepherds at Cliefden sometimes worked longer hours and possibly earned slightly less than their compatriots on Ollera during the mid-1860s, a significant change from the situation a decade earlier. This evidence also suggests that the wages Chinese shepherds earned in the mid-1860s were more consistent across the colony than they had been a decade earlier.

[39] Ibid., entry for 22 December 1866; Cliefden Station Diary 1867-1868, ML FM4/6481, entry for 4 January 1867.
[40] Ibid., entry for 5 January 1867.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid; Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 410.
[43] 'Labour Reports: Haigh and Brown', *Empire*, 2 April 1864, p. 2.
[44] 'Labour Reports: Haigh and Brown', *Empire*, 21 April 1864, p. 3; 'Labour Market', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1867, p. 3.
[45] Rodwell, 'Figures in the Landscape', p. 26.

One of the key questions Darnell investigated in her study of indentured Chinese shepherds on nine properties in the northern pastoral districts between 1847 and 1855 was whether those shepherds ended their periods of employment in credit. She looked at the balance due to them after deducting their accrued station store debt and found that 'very few' finished with a credit balance, 'most only just balanced their costs with their wages due, and many continued in debt'.[46] She attributed this to the 'unscrupulous overpricing' of goods available at station stores and argued that this overpricing was a means by which 'squatters' could 'recoup a substantial amount of the wages they were liable to pay'.[47] She argued that as 'fraudulent breach, or absconding in debt' brought the most severe penalty under the *Master and Servant Act*, employers kept Chinese labourers 'in a legally defined and enforceable position of debt peonage'.[48]

While Darnell's explanation is plausible, her assertion of 'unscrupulous overpricing' is based on a limited comparison between the prices listed in only one station journal and the prices listed in the *Statistical Register of New South Wales, 1849-1858*. Furthermore, it fails to take into account the low wages from which the store accounts were deducted, something that undoubtedly contributed significantly to the prevalence of indebtedness among indentured Chinese shepherds on pastoral stations in the northern districts.

One of Rothery's letters provides important additional comparative information that helps to reassess Darnell's claim. His letter to Crawford in June 1851 provides a comparison between the prices per pound of five of the most commonly purchased commodities at the Cliefden Station store and at three other locations, including Carcoar, the nearest township to Cliefden.[49] It is more appropriate to compare the prices in a station store with the prices in the nearest township than to compare them with prices in Sydney. The prices quoted in Rothery's letter appear in the table below.

Table 2. Prices in June 1851

	Cliefden	Carcoar	Wellington	Sydney
Tea	3s.6d	3s.6p	3s.6p	1s.3p
Sugar	1s	1s	1s	3½p
Tobacco	8s	8s	12s	7s
Flour	7½p	7½p	1s	3p
Meat	3½p	3½p	3p	1½p

[46] Darnell, 'Life and Labour for Indentured Chinese Shepherds', p. 155.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] W. Montagu Rothery to J. C. Crawford, 15 June 1851.

The prices charged for tea, sugar, tobacco, flour and meat at the Cliefden Station store in June 1851 were identical to those charged at Carcoar. Tea and sugar prices at Cliefden, Carcoar and the more distant township of Wellington were identical; tobacco and sugar prices at Cliefden and Carcoar were considerably lower than at Wellington; and only meat was slightly dearer at Cliefden and Carcoar than at Wellington. Only Sydney prices were consistently lower than at Cliefden, Carcoar and Wellington. Therefore, the assertion that station stores participated in 'unscrupulous overpricing' is a generalisation that does not apply in every case. In fact, it would have been in pastoralists' interests to set their station store prices at a similar level to those of the accessible townships in order to encourage patronage and discourage truancy.

The Cliefden Station records provide details of most of the balances due to Chinese shepherds after the deduction of their store accounts from their wages. The table below lists the thirty-two Chinese men who are known to have worked on Cliefden as shepherds between 1853 and 1883, that is, those whose names appear in the microfilmed station ledgers, diaries and daybook. The table includes the dates on which the shepherds started and ended their employment on the station, and the balance of wages due to them after deducting their station store accounts, if known.[50] Some dates and amounts are unknown because the records are either illegible or were no longer extant when microfilming took place in 1975. The first five men listed in the table worked on Cliefden during the period covered in Darnell's study. Of these, each of the three with known balances left comfortably in credit. Therefore, the situation of indebtedness Darnell describes in her study of Chinese shepherds on pastoral stations in the northern districts is not applicable to Cliefden. This is undoubtedly because of the higher wages Chinese shepherds earned on Cliefden during that period.

[50] Cliefden Station Ledgers, 1849-1870 and 1877-1895, ML FM4/6483; Cliefden Station Day Book, 1868-1883, ML FM4/6482.

Table 3. Chinese shepherds, their dates of service and balances on departure

* Denotes additional duties, such as hut keeping, gardening, cooking, shearing or watching.

Shepherd's Name	Start	End	Balance after Deductions
Chum Loo	26.9.1853	18.7.1854	£36.2s.0d
'Sam'*	26.3.1855	30.5.1855	absconded with nil balance after losing 'about 40 sheep'
Biar*	26.3.1855	24.12.1855	£19.15s.6d (absconded in credit three months after renewing his agreement)
Gedeong*	26.3.1855	unknown	absconded
Amoy*	30.3.1855	10.9.1855	£5.2s.6d (lost 36 sheep)
Ly	27.8.1859	27.11.1859	unknown
Hong Kong*	12.5.1860	?.10.1861	£53.9s.7d
Yow	15.2.1860	unknown	absconded
'Jimmy'*	1.4.1862	23.1.1863	£25.5s.1d
Dooy	1.9.1864	28.2.1865	£8.10s.0d
'Tom'*	28.4.1862	28.4. 1864	£39.2s.11d
RY*	4.4.1863	13.9.1869	£89.14s.0d
Hong	8.5.1863	26.7.1866	absconded 5.2.1864 leaving '43 sheep in bush', then returned; paid £6.17s.6d
Kason 'Jimmy'*	21.8.1864	?.1.1865	£5.10s.11d
Ah Loo*	19.10.1864	10.3.1866	£23.7s.11d
Ah Kan*	13.10.1864	4.1.1866	Paid £26.19s.6d 13.10.1865; absconded 4.1.1866, in credit – warrant taken out 5.1.1866
'Billy'	16.12.1864	25.2.1865	£4.18s.10d
'Tommy'*	1.10.1864	?.1.1865	absconded
Ki*	2.9.1865	23.2.1866	-£58.5s.0d (lost 68 ewes and 121 lambs)
Chee*	26.7.1866	28.3.1867	£2.6s.8d
Ah Hing*	28.8.1866	unknown	unknown
Ah Too*	13.10.1867	9.7.1868	£14.9s.7d
Ah Sum	22.3.1869	unknown	£1.14s.0d
Ah Jon*	22.3.1869	6.5.1870	£26.15s.0d
Ah Tong	22.3.1869	17.5.1869	£1.14s.0d
Ah Lun*	15.4.1869	15.4.1870	£28.6s.2d
Ah Ton	1870	1870	unknown
Ah Ling & wife	14.6.1873	14.10.1873	£8.2s.10d
'Willie'*	1.3.1870	1.3.1874	£66.19.3d
Ah Poo	1878	1878	unknown
'Billy' Segway	7.11.1874	24.1.1883	£64.9s.8d
Ah Sing (Ah Sene)	1882	1.12.1882	£1.14s.6d

The better financial position of Cliefden's Chinese shepherds is even more striking when viewed over a longer period. Over the course of three decades, of the twenty-four Chinese shepherds (seventy-five per cent of the total) whose final balances appear in the Cliefden Station records, all but two ended their periods of employment at Cliefden in credit. The remaining shepherds, Sam and Ki, would have been in credit had they not been penalised for the loss of forty and 189 sheep respectively. In other words, their debt was not due to purchases made from the station store. Each of the nine shepherds who definitely worked at Cliefden for twelve months or more left with more than £20.

It is also of value to examine the various types of work performed by these labourers whose contribution was clearly critical to the running of the station. Close examination of the records of Chinese workers on Cliefden reveals widespread preparedness on their part to participate in a range of tasks. Nineteen of the thirty-two Chinese shepherds chose to earn extra income by performing additional duties such as hut keeping, shearing or watching. Some Chinese shepherds worked at Cliefden in other roles before they began shepherding. For example, Rothery paid Ah Loo £2.10s for one month of spring gardening before he began shepherding and watching duties in October 1864.[51] Another Chinese worker, Ah Too, spent just under two months sheep washing and haymaking on a weekly wage of twenty shillings before beginning work as a shepherd and watchman for seven months in 1867.[52] Ah Sum, Ah Jon and Ah Tong initially spent a few weeks mending yards before beginning shepherding duties.[53] The versatility of Chinese shepherds would have contributed to making the use of their labour an attractive proposition.

A few Chinese never worked as shepherds on Cliefden but performed a variety of other duties. For example, San Sing gardened for 8 shillings per week in 1867,[54] and 'Sam' began working as a cook in March 1862 for a wage of seventeen shillings per week for six months.[55] Sam was absent for three consecutive days during his second week, followed by two days' work and another two days off sick. He was absent for another five consecutive days three months later. The station records contain no explanation for his eight days' absences. They may have been for some legitimate purpose, such as attending court as a witness. When Sam's six-month period of engagement expired, Rothery discharged him

[51] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 416.
[52] Cliefden Station Diary 1867-1868, ML FM4/6481, entry for 15 October 1867
[53] Cliefden Station Daybook 1868-1876, ML FM4/6482, entry for 22 March 1869.
[54] Cliefden Station Diary 1867-1868, entry for 25 October 1867.
[55] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 395.

after paying him £14.13s, the balance left after deducting ten days pay and his accrued debt at the station store, and adding £1 for assistance he had given to a Chinese shepherd.[56]

At least two other Chinese men subsequently worked as cooks at Cliefden. A second 'Sam' started nine months after the first 'Sam' had left.[57] This 'Sam' had been at Cliefden for two months when one of Rothery's sons noticed bushranger Ben Hall and four accomplices entering the property at eleven o'clock one Saturday morning in September 1863.[58] The young Rothery raised the alarm and Sam armed himself with a carving knife and toasting fork before climbing through a window into the homestead to help defend the family and their possessions.[59] Rothery and his two sons armed themselves with fowling pieces and revolvers. When the bushrangers arrived at the door, Rothery ordered his sons not to fire, but to put down their weapons and open the door.[60]

Hall and his accomplices entered and Sam was despatched to the kitchen to cook dinner for them while Rothery was kept handcuffed to a chair.[61] After eating, demanding brandy and champagne, proposing the health of Mr Rothery and his sons and ordering Rothery's daughters to play the piano while two of the gang danced, the bushrangers selected three horses and two new saddles and bridles before departing at two o'clock.[62] Newspaper reports of the bushrangers' visit refer to Sam only as 'the cook'. The station ledger reveals his identity, even though the name probably bears little or no resemblance to his Chinese name, as was often the case in colonial records.[63] Brave Sam remained at Cliefden until his agreement expired, departing on good terms with a cheque for £14.6s and a memorable experience to relate.

Not every Chinese cook left on such good terms. In October 1873, Rothery engaged 'Joey' as a cook and baker for twelve months at £39 per annum.[64] When Joey absconded in February the following year, 'leaving the breakfast uncooked', Rothery calculated that in the seventeen weeks Joey had been at Cliefden he had been absent on four days and drunk on five days.[65] Accordingly, he deducted nine days pay as well as his store account from his

[56] Ibid.
[57] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 398.
[58] 'Bathurst', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 1863, p. 4; 'Bushranging', *Empire*, 6 October 1863, p. 2.
[59] *Empire*, 6 October 1863, p.2.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.; 'Crime in the Interior', *Empire*, 21 October 1863, p. 2.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, p. 45.
[64] Cliefden Station Daybook 1868-1876, entry for 7 October 1873.
[65] Ibid., entry for 5 February 1874.

gross earnings, leaving Joey with a credit balance of £4.2s.9d.[66] Whether Rothery paid Joey the balance due to him is not clear, but Joey returned to Cliefden two days after absconding, appearing at the back door and asking for money. Rothery observed that he was 'very dirty' and had been either smoking opium or was drunk and 'ordered him off'.[67] He had no difficulty replacing Joey. A new cook and baker, William Jackson, started work at the same wage of £39 for twelve months the day after Joey departed.[68] This is another example of European and Chinese workers earning the same wage for the same labour. It is also one of only a few instances in which the Cliefden Station records allude to opium smoking.

Considering the widespread attention historians have given to gambling and opium smoking amongst the Chinese, the Cliefden Station archive contains no reference to gambling and few references to opium despite the number of Chinese who worked on the property and the duration of their collective presence. The importation of opium into Australia was legal until 1906 and, according to historian Valerie Lovejoy, it was easily acquired as a medicinal compound in nineteenth-century Victoria, and therefore undoubtedly also in New South Wales.[69] There is evidence that it was at least briefly available for purchase at the Cliefden Station store. According to the available ledgers, the Chinese shepherd known as Ki purchased opium from the station store on five separate occasions between October 1865 and February 1866.[70] Neither of the other two Chinese shepherds present during the same period purchased opium from the station store.

Compared with tobacco, opium was expensive. The station ledger entry for Ki shows that opium went from twice to three times the price of tobacco, selling at the station store in October 1865 for 3s per ounce and rising to 4s.6p per ounce in January 1866, compared with 1s.6p per ounce for tobacco.[71] The price rise reflected the rise in government tariffs from 10s per pound weight in 1865 to 20s per pound in 1866.[72] The price per ounce charged at Cliefden in 1866 was the same as that generally charged in Victoria only two years later, further evidence that prices at Cliefden's store were not excessive.[73] The stocking of opium in the station store was probably a response to anticipated demand. However, the brief

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., entry for 7 February 1874.
[68] Ibid., entry for 8 February 1874.
[69] V. Lovejoy, 'Chinese in Late Nineteenth-Century Bendigo: Their local and trans-local lives in 'this strangers' country', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 42, Issue 1 (2011) , p. 57.
[70] Cliefden Station Ledger 1849-1870, p. 427.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Wilton, *Golden Threads*, p. 70.
[73] Lovejoy, 'Chinese in Late Nineteenth-Century Bendigo', p. 57.

period of its availability and the lack of more than a single customer suggest that demand, whether for medicinal or recreational purposes, was too slight to justify its continued supply.

Another issue that deserves attention is the involvement of Chinese labourers with the legal system. In her study, Darnell found that, while station owners rarely prosecuted Chinese labourers for absconding, Chinese were over-represented in cases brought before the Benches of Magistrates, mainly on charges of insubordination.[74] She found that a scarcity of 'efficient' interpreters deprived the Chinese of natural justice and their inability to understand the court system or the charges against them disadvantaged them even further.[75] She also suggested that this disadvantage was aggravated by the cosy relationships between magistrates.[76]

There is no evidence that Rothery ever attempted to prosecute a Chinese labourer for insubordination. On the contrary, the Cliefden Station records reveal only three instances of Chinese workers going to court, and the Chinese labourer was the plaintiff each time. The first case would have qualified as one of insubordination. Rothery recorded the circumstances in the station diary:

> Ah Loo got 3 Bells out of Stores for Lambs, then refused to take the Lambs unless I let him go to Carcoar first. On my telling him I would not let him go now, that I required him, his period of agreement not having expired, he said if I did not give him money he would not take the Lambs. I told him he was very foolish. He still said he would not take the Lambs and returned me the Bells & Straps and left Cliefden. I put Devonshire with the Lambs.[77]

Three days later, Rothery recorded having been served with a summons on Ah Loo's account.[78] Another three days later, he recorded that the case had been dismissed on the plaintiff's statement, that no witnesses had been called and that he (Rothery) had not been required to answer to the charge.[79]

The second case involved Ah Hing, who was taken to Bathurst to testify against a European man, Patrick Bourke, who had threatened him with a pistol and stolen £20.3s.6d and an ounce of gold from him two months earlier. Ah Hing succeeded in proving Bourke's guilt 'notwithstanding a number of witnesses [having] sought to prove an alibi', and the

[74] Darnell, 'The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales', pp. 286-287.
[75] Ibid., p. 287.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Cliefden Station Diary 1865-1866, entry for 10 March 1866.
[78] Ibid., entry for 13 March 1866.
[79] Ibid., entry for 16 March 1866.

offender was sentenced to ten years' hard labour on the roads.[80] The hearing began sixteen days after Ah Hing was engaged as a shepherd and watchman on Cliefden in August 1866 and required six days' absence from work, leave that Rothery willingly granted.[81]

The third case involved Ah Too, who brought a case against Rothery, claiming unpaid wages. Rothery's efficient record keeping helped him to prove his innocence. He recorded the following in the station diary after the case concluded.

> Ah Too's case: Verdict against Ah Too – receipt in full of Balance of wages to 9th July produced which Ah Too swore he never saw or signed. Sworn by WMR. Signed in my presence and in the presence of Stanley - witness to payment and acknowledgement of account.[82]

These three cases show that Chinese labourers were prepared to engage with the legal system as plaintiffs, confident that magistrates would deal with their complaints equitably and without any kind of disadvantage.

This chapter has documented the presence of nearly forty Chinese workers on Cliefden Station over a thirty-year period. These labourers performed a variety of tasks - shepherding, hut-keeping, watching, sheep-washing, shearing, haymaking, mending yards, gardening and cooking – tasks that were clearly critical to the running of the station. For the most part, the relationship satisfied both Rothery and his Chinese employees. Rothery never had to worry, as pastoralists in the northern pastoral districts did, that the Chinese 'worked all right until they got to understand that they were not being paid as liberally as the white workers',[83] because Rothery never paid Chinese workers less than he paid Europeans. This practice undoubtedly contributed to the success of the relationship.

The Cliefden Station records do not provide answers to every question. They do not provide details of the ages or exact places of origin of the Chinese labourers who worked on the property. We can only extrapolate from what is known of Chinese migration during the period, that is, that most Chinese who entered New South Wales were young and came from Amoy or the Pearl River Delta districts in Guandong (Kwangtung), while a few came from

[80] 'Law: Bathurst Criminal Court', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1866, p. 2; *Empire*, 23 October 1866, p. 3.
[81] Cliefden Station Diary 1865-1866, entries for 28 August and 13 October 1866.
[82] Cliefden Station Diary 1868-1876, entry for 7 August 1868.
[83] W. A. Duncan to H. H. Browne, 27 October 1853, quoted in M. Darnell, 'The Chinese Labour Trade to New South Wales', p. 297.

Hong Kong or Singapore.[84] Nor do the station records reveal anything about the movements of Cliefden's Chinese employees within New South Wales, either prior to arrival at Cliefden or after departure from the property. None of their names match those on the list of indentured shepherds compiled by Darnell or those mentioned by Brodie. Therefore, they may never have been under indenture. We may surmise that some were disenchanted gold miners. Ah Hing almost certainly was, as he was in possession of one ounce of gold just weeks before being engaged to work on Cliefden Station, as mentioned above.

This account of Chinese labour on Cliefden reminds us that not all the Chinese who were present in the colonies during the gold rushes mined for gold or provided goods or services to people on the goldfields. The 1871 *New South Wales Census* was the first to distinguish between 'goldfields' and 'rural' populations in the same districts. It indicates that in the district in which Cliefden is situated there were then fifty Chinese males on the goldfields and forty-eight Chinese males in the rural zones.[85] As only one Chinese shepherd worked on Cliefden in 1871, forty-seven Chinese must have been working on other properties in the district. None of these would have been indentured, as the indentured Chinese labour trade ended in 1855. Examination of records that may exist for those and other properties would help to more fully review the 'mythical' Chinese figure Marchant referred to in 1962. This would not only help us to see the part Chinese played in the history of labour in New South Wales, it would also provide us with a more accurate picture of the past.

[84] C. Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (Sydney, 1975), p.3; M. Williams, 'Chinese Settlement in NSW: A Thematic History', Report for the NSW Heritage Office, Sydney, 1999, pp. 11-12. http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/chinesehistory.pdf, accessed 12 August 2014.

[85] 'Nationality' in Belubula, Burnt Yards, Lumpy Swamp and Flyer's Creek gold fields, and Rural in the same district in the Census of New South Wales, 1871 http://hccda.anu.edu.au/pages/NSW-1871-census-03_333, accessed 12 August 2014.

Conclusion

The station records used in this thesis offer rare detail that helps to flesh out accounts of Aboriginal, Chinese and European people working together in the shared space of a pastoral station in nineteenth-century New South Wales. We currently have no way of knowing how representative Cliefden was because so few studies have been made of individual pastoral properties that employed both Aboriginal and Chinese workers. While this study of two small groups of people on one station contributes to our knowledge of Aboriginal and Chinese labour relations in nineteenth-century rural New South Wales, far more historical work is needed. The pool of samples needs to be larger, and similar sources analysed and compared, asking the same questions. Until more work is done, we cannot say how typical Cliefden was. It is therefore a study of a case, rather than a case study.

Nevertheless, the case of Cliefden shows that pastoral stations in colonial New South Wales could be sites of mutual accommodation and relatively equitable labour relations. This is not to say that overall power relations were symmetrical. Aboriginal people no longer had control of their land, they had endured decades of traumatic violence, and their freedom was restricted. However, Rothery provided Aboriginal people with a safe haven, a place where they could come and go without interference. Furthermore, whilst he initially made use of their traditional skills and local knowledge, he paid them the same wages he paid European people once they began to enter into full-time labour agreements. Because of their diverse skills, reliability and willingness to work, Aboriginal employees proved integral to the successful operation of Cliefden Station in a variety of roles, and for lengthy periods, even multiple generations. The case of Cliefden firmly contradicts the popular stereotypes of Aboriginal people as lazy, non-productive, or unwilling to work.

The case of Cliefden also contradicts the stereotype of Chinese as itinerant gold diggers. Clearly, not all the Chinese in New South Wales during the gold rush period were present on the goldfields or occupied in providing services to those who were. Nor were they all itinerants. Some stayed at Cliefden for several years. Despite initial apprehension, Rothery continued to employ Chinese workers for more than thirty years, and he paid them the same wages that he paid European workers. This thesis demonstrates that almost all of those Chinese who worked at Cliefden were skilled, reliable and willing to work. As was the case with Aboriginal workers, they proved integral to the successful operation of Cliefden Station in a variety of roles and, in some cases, for several years.

The consistency between William Montagu Rothery's treatment of Aboriginal and Chinese people on Cliefden is particularly striking. While in the wider community both groups encountered prejudice, discrimination and hostility, archival records show that at Cliefden they found a liberal and fair-minded employer. This account expands and helps balance the generally accepted view of Aboriginal and Chinese experience in colonial New South Wales. Enormous scope for further historical analysis still exists. More fine-grained, place-based research will provide additional perspectives and a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal, Chinese and settler experience in pastoral Australia, and particularly why some pastoral stations were scenes of conflict, while others, like Cliefden, were shared landscapes.

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